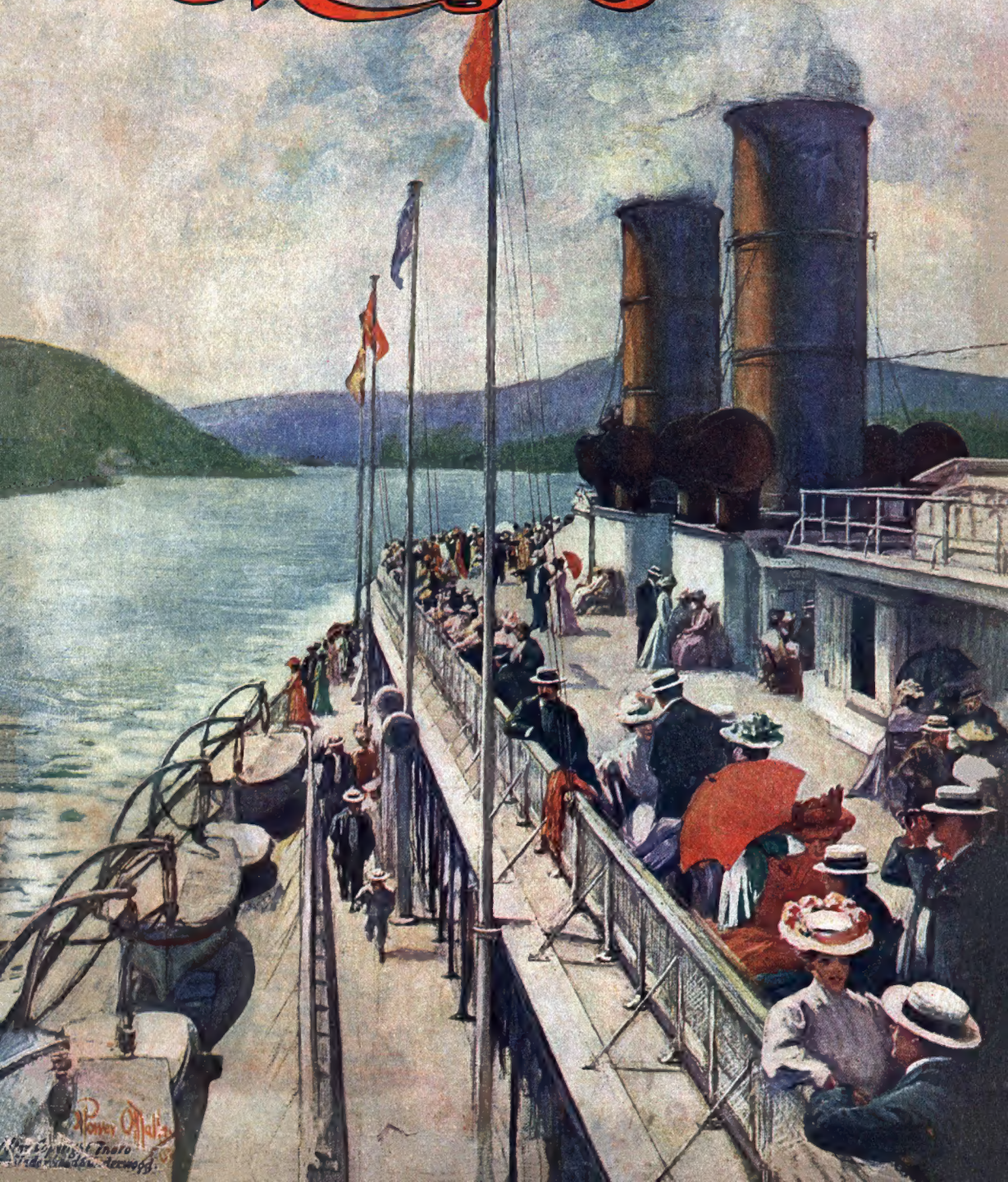


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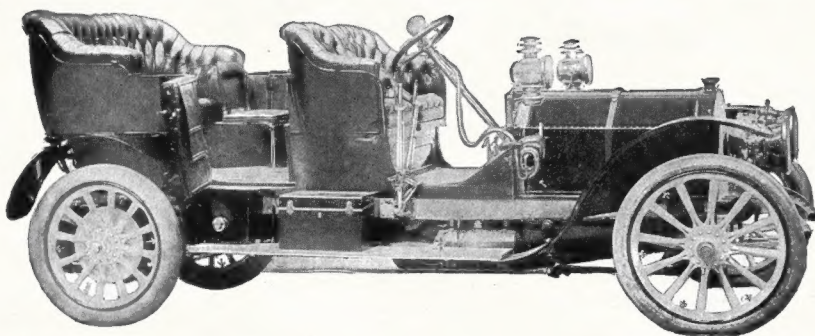
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SEPTEMBER

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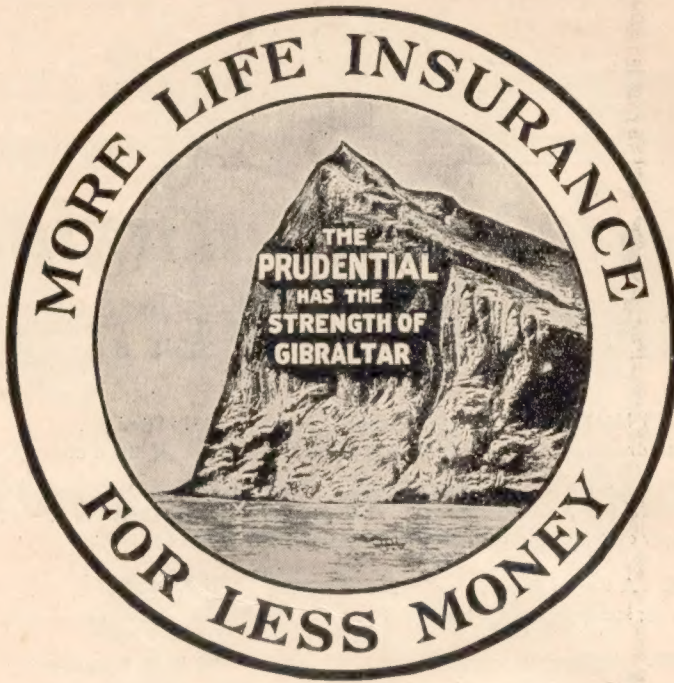
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A Man and His Mate

By H. R. Durant

Author of "Ambition," "Wallops," "Hurricane Harry," Etc.

A story replete with onrushing action and tense situations, a powerful drama worked out in the vast solitude of a Western alkali desert. When Harry Ogden, a rich young New Yorker, drug-crazed, leaves the Overland Express in the heart of the desert, steals a horse and dashes over the plain of alkali, he does not dream of the thrilling consequences of his insane act. A new world of events is set in motion—for good and for evil. There are not lacking touches of humor, however. Some of the Western types introduced by the author are refreshingly funny.

(A Complete Novel)



HERE are two things in this world hard for the brain of man to overcome—the heat and the desert—and when these two things are together all human agencies are well-nigh powerless in their grasp. On and on into the midst of this stifling heat and limitless desert sped the Overland Express. Ahead, the glistening steel ribbons seemed to scintillate a white heat—behind, the swirling alkali dust fell upon them and snuffed out their glare. Within the green-clothed Pullman, the passengers lay back in semi-exhaustion literally baked through and through. Outside, the heat radiated in quivering rays as far as the eye could see. Below, the parched, cracked surface of the alkali lay unslaked by the dewless night. Above, not a speck of a cloud in the azure dome. Occasionally the drear

outlook was broken by patches of bristling cactus, but beyond this all was a hopeless, dreary desert—always the desert.

The train stopped for a moment at a watering-tank, in the shadow of which squatted an Indian, motionless and stolid of mien. The engineer tossed him a piece of silver and the red man gracefully leaned forward on his upturned moccasins, straightened himself with a lithe, animallike movement and then stood erect as a sapling. He bent over easily for the money, grasped it and then dropped again to his squatting position without as much as the flicker of an eyelid in acknowledgment. He was a beggar, but his pride made him beg and accept alms in a royal manner. Again the train rushed into the stifling oven of a country.

In the smoking-compartment of the Pullman, a man suddenly reached forward and jabbed the push-button vi-

ciously. In answer to his sharp ring the negro porter appeared quickly and stood patiently while the man lay back on the hot leather cushions and glared into the seething waste outside. In this moving furnace the negro porter remained unruffled and serene. Heat had no terrors for him and in his face was reflected that effervescent good nature which the Almighty has given to those of his race as an offset for making them black.

This particular traveler had been a great trial to the porter ever since the train had left New Orleans, but his vagaries he had viewed with an admirable tolerance, and it was not altogether because of the generous tips he had received. There was something about this petulant, nervous man which commanded both obedience and respect—something indefinable which clearly marks the difference between quality and quantity in the human family. Even this dense and smiling negro could see it, and he was quick to follow the tradition of his ancestors which is to bear and serve.

Suddenly the man stood up, stretching himself to his slender height of six feet and then lunged violently with his right hand into the humid atmosphere. Involuntarily the porter ducked. Then there was a pause in which neither spoke.

Outwardly this inferno of choking heat had made no impression upon the man, for his face was as white as Carrara marble and his skin as dry as the alkali of the desert. At his temples was what Carlyle calls "the first touch of the eternal dawn," and above two strongly marked bluish crescents were two dark eyes which just now gazed vacantly into space, but anon their somber depths seemed to lighten with fleeting visions. All day he had sat and controlled himself by a supreme effort, but he was only human and now even his will-power was breaking under the strain. He turned to the still patient porter with a look which made the negro's smile vanish at once.

"How much longer have I got to wait before I can find a drug-shop?" he

snarled. He took a step toward the porter threateningly and continued: "Didn't you hear my question, you black ape? A drug-shop—*D-R-U-G*." The negro backed away and his gleaming white teeth again showed in a smile.

"A drug-store?" he grinned. "Why, good Lord, man, I don't know of any drug-store 'til we get to Frisco."

"What do you say?" almost hissed the passenger—"not a drug-shop until we reach San Francisco?"

"No, sah," answered the porter.

There was a long pause and then the man said slowly as though more to himself: "I have stood it from New Orleans—I have stood it as long as I could, and now I have got to quit—quit, like a dog that I am." The porter interposed soothingly:

"I'm sorry we're all out of ice, but if you jus' keep quiet, it'll help a lot, sah. I've seen lots of cases jus' like yours, sah, an' I know jus' how you feel but, my Gawd, man, I've had passengers that ravin' crazy with the heat that we just had to tie 'em down 'til we struck th' foot-hills. If you can stan' it until this evenin', it'll be much cooler then. My goodness, but I don't see what such heat as this was ever made for, nohow." The traveler's eyes had been staring outside during the porter's speech and now they turned and searched the other.

"Heat? Did you say heat? It is not heat that is blistering me here"—he beat his breast. "It is not heat that is burning holes in me here"—he struck his forehead with his clenched fist. "It is the heat of want, it is the heat of desire, it is the heat of a need for something I must have and which I cannot get that is consuming me to ashes." His voice lingered and dropped to a whisper.

He sank to his seat again and covered his face with hands which trembled. The porter quietly withdrew and left him. To the conductor he confided:

"Seat number ten in my cah is all in, sah. He just done punched his haid an' then fell down acting like he had

chills an' fever. I wouldn't be s'prised if we had a mighty heap of trouble with him 'fore we get off th' desert."

"I hope he stands it until we get to Bonita," replied the conductor. "We may pick up some ice there and that'll cool us all off a bit. I guess his case is nothing unusual." Nevertheless, he strolled back and took a look at the occupant of seat number ten, who still remained in the smoking-compartment with his head bowed on his twitching hands.

The heat grew fiercer and into its appalling fumes rushed the train, leaving the dense clouds of alkali hanging in its wake like a line of smoke from a battery in action. Suddenly shot into view the town of Bonita—a shack of a railway-station, a couple of wooden houses and half a dozen adobe huts, comprising its sum total of public buildings, private residences and manufactories. The air-brakes set with a hiss, the wheels locked with a shriek and then with a jerk the train came to a standstill. The conductor swung down, hurried to the window of the telegraph-office and returned with the yellow despatch fluttering in his fingers. The negro porter met him at the steps.

"No ice, sah?" he questioned, in dismay.

"No ice," laconically. "All aboard!"

However, there was some delay with the baggage, and then from the direction of the baggage-car came a man who carried a baby in his arms. He entered the Pullman and was given seat number nine, directly across the aisle from the passenger whose angry outburst a short time since had worried the porter. This passenger had now returned to his seat and lay back inert among the cushions. His face was a death-mask. Across the aisle the baby began to fret. The father fumbled awkwardly at the infant's garments and after dint of much hard work succeeded in loosening a few buttons and baring the smooth, white skin of the baby's back and chest. Then the father vigorously flapped the air with his wide sombrero and for a moment its cooling drafts stilled the child's whimpers.

After a time, though, the baby began to cry again and nothing the father could do seemed to allay its suffering. As its cries grew louder the father picked it up, strode to the rear of the car and back again. The baby was now crying shrilly with a catch in its voice at the end of every lingering sob. This was more than the occupant of seat number ten could stand and he rose suddenly to his feet.

"You ought to be ashamed," he said fiercely to the father, "to bring a little baby like that out in such a hell-hole of a furnace as this is!" The other surveyed him quietly for a moment and then drawled wearily:

"I reckon you're right, stranger, but it ain't any choice of mine. I am sorry this babby is a-bothering you and I wish I could stop him a-crying, but I just can't do it."

"Sorry!" he answered. "You ought to be sorry! What he needs is his mother. Can't you see he is hungry and wants his mother?"

"Yes," he answered in the same dreary voice. "I know he is hungry and I know he wants his mother, but I just can't help that."

"Can't help it?—of course you can help it! Why don't you take him to his mother?"

There was a pause, and then the man unconsciously drew the sobbing youngster closer as he drawled softly: "I reckon, stranger, that you don't know as how this babby's mother is up yonder in the baggage-car." Then he continued on his walk down the aisle. A hush followed this announcement.

In seat number twelve a pompous drummer loudly cleared his throat and spat with unerring precision at the cuspidor. The traveler in seat number ten dropped weakly into his former position without a further word of reproval. His eyelids fell heavily and into his face slowly crept a crimson wave which rose and flooded his cheeks a deep red. This quickly receded and left him whiter than before, if that were possible.

Exhausted and tired, the baby finally went to sleep on the shoulder of his

father, who untiringly paced back and forth noiselessly as the endless moments came and went. In the distance now appeared the foot-hills and to the north-west the lowering mountains towered with their snow-clad peaks standing like white-headed sentinels on guard over the sterile, spreading desert. On toward them rushed the speeding train, the man in number ten having a hard time of it. The grinding, bounding wheels of the trucks below seemed to ricochet into his aching brain until he felt as if he must scream aloud. His lips moved in half-hysterical mutterings and anon he set his teeth with an audible click, unmindful of the stinging dust, or the stray cinders, which somehow beat their way into the car and scorched his face like hot needles. More and more the resounding metal wheels rang through his head in a wild tumult.

Suddenly the whistle of the engine burst into a long shriek and its terrifying, penetrating wail brought him back to earth and to an upright position. They were approaching another desert town. He stood upon his feet dizzily, wavered for an instant and then zigzagged to the doorway, where he paused while the train came to a stop. The conductor made his usual trip to the window of the train-despatcher and back again and then waved his arm to the watching engineer who lay half out of the cab window. The bell rang and slowly the train got into motion. As the Pullman reached the end of the narrow, wooden station platform the former occupant of seat number ten sprang lightly from the steps to the platform and stood there silent, coatless and bareheaded in the blinding heat. The only sign of life about the station was a splendid-looking thoroughbred mare, quietly standing in the shade of the station. The man drew his hand across his forehead twice and then walked toward the horse. As he neared the animal he made two quick leaps and in another instant was in the saddle. She whirled with him and with a yell he slapped her flank with his open hand. As he did so out of the station door

and around the corner of the building plunged a man with a shining forty-five Colt in his hand.

"Hey—come back yere, yo' damned thief!" he yelled to the man on horseback, and followed this command with three peremptory shots from his revolver.

The rider turned in his saddle and let out a wild, derisive yell for an answer.

The operator joined the man with the smoking revolver, wide-eyed and mouth open, and together they watched the figure of the man on the galloping horse, now gradually growing less in the distance. In the west the fast-disappearing train was but a speck on the horizon.

Thus they stood in silence until horse and rider vanished. Then the man with the revolver turned to his companion and said, huskily: "Well, what th' hell do yo' think o' that?"

CHAPTER II.

Straight toward the foot-hills rode the man at a steady lope. The blistering sun beat vengefully down upon his uncovered head and through his negligée shirt until it seemed as if he must shrivel up and fall to the ground—a brown, withered mass. The horse was a splendid animal and covered the miles to the hills with apparently very little effort. Not once did he urge her on and thus she carried him at unabated speed until the rising grade which marks the beginning of the foot-hills was reached. Here she slowed gradually and came to a walk. Then for the first time since he left the train the man appeared to take notice of his surroundings. He turned in the saddle and surveyed the ground he had covered which led back into the southwest. The scene upon which his eyes fell was desolation complete—not a bird in the sky, not a spear of grass nor any creeping or living thing on earth—just a silent, poisonous land, shunned by the living, unworthy of the outcast dead.

The dropping sun lit up his face now and seemed suddenly to bathe it with a rosy glow. On his forehead little

beads of perspiration glistened. With his tongue he sought to wet his cracked lips, but the effort failed. There was not a drop of moisture in his dried-up body. He turned again to the north and felt the first touch of the cool breeze from the distant, snow-clad mountain-peaks. It toyed with him lingeringly, flickering over his burning face as soft and gentle as the caressing fingers of a baby. He drew a deep breath and raised his head. For a moment the wild delirium which had held him tenaciously all day long left him, and he realized where he was. He pulled the mare to a standstill. The man's brows lowered to a scowl as into his brain surged a mad desire to destroy—to kill! Somebody must pay for this curse which had fallen upon him—the blight which had struck him down he would pass on to others, a deadly heritage to a blameless heir from a blameless ancestor—but was he blameless? He laughed loud and long and paused with a start as his eyes suddenly fastened upon an object on the ground just ahead. The echo of his own mirthless laugh, thrown back to him by the nearby boulders, was followed quickly by a terrified snort from the mare and she leaned back—stiff-legged and trembling.

"Oh," he breathed, with a long sigh and patted the horse's neck, "you see it too, do you, old girl? Then that lets me out."

Silently both man and beast watched the swaying, flat head of the rattler nodding rhythmically over coils tightly wrapped to the tension of spiral steel springs. The waning sunlight played over the diamond-marked skin of the reptile and its little, beady eyes reflected the setting sun in two tiny, glittering balls of fire. He loosened the long, black quirt from the pommel and swung himself to the ground.

"Now be a good horse and don't run away," he whispered in her ear, "because I'm going to see if I can slice off a few rattler steaks." She stood quietly and he approached the snake, which now beat back and forth faster and in a wider sphere.

"Well, Mr. Snake," mused the man reflectively as he flicked the dirt with his quirt, "you are like myself, of no absolute good in this world, and yet you probably would not hurt any one if let alone. In this respect you rather have it on me, because I not only hurt myself but am apt to contaminate those with whom I come in contact. And you're full of poison, too—just like I am—but yours doesn't hurt you—while mine is slowly eating my brain and tearing my very body to pieces. Yes," he continued, "you are a snake with enough venom in that nodding head of yours to annihilate a family of human beings and yet you have more right to live in this God-forsaken, arid land than I have to exist anywhere on-earth—for you are what you were made, while I—why, I—am just what I have made myself." Again he laughed bitterly. "Well, between you and me there is only one law—the law which has prevailed since the beginning of man, which is, the survival of the fittest—so here goes!" He sprang lightly toward the reptile and, as the snake struck blindly, the man slipped to one side and swung his quirt downward with a hissing swish. Then he turned. On the ground lay the rattlesnake in two parts, separated as cleanly as though a razor-blade had done the work. For a moment he grimly surveyed the result of skill and then he spoke, but again as more to himself:

"Mr. Rattler, you didn't know you were up against a whip who could flick a fly from the ear of the off leader, did you?" He turned on his heel to find the horse watching him.

"You're a good kind of a nag," he said, and rubbed her nose. "At least, you have a nice, full eye and you look as if you were bred where they know that it is breeding which counts in horses as well as in men. Well, it looks as though you and I would have to spend the night in these hills alone. I'm sorry I have no supper for you, but whatever happens I'll never abuse you." He pulled himself into the saddle again and headed toward the range. "No, I'll never abuse you, old girl," he re-

peated, "because I'm through abusing everybody and that includes myself. Wish we could find water somewhere. Never mind—just you stick to me to-night—I'm a coward at night because when it's dark then I see things—yes, I see ever so much more than I do in the daytime, and that is saying a good deal, old girl, I can tell you. Then in the morning I'll turn you loose before this accursed sun has roasted us as dry as a bone, and you'll find your way home and I'll go——" He paused in his rambling talk and stared ahead vacantly.

Yes, where would he go? True his earthly journey was all but finished and yet there was another just about to begin. Into what new fields would this one take him? Pah! He did not know—neither did he care! He had gone his limit and this was the end. What was to come didn't count—it was what he had had which counted and this no one—no, neither the powers of the heavens nor the earth—could take from him what he had seen and done in that life behind him. Anyway, nobody had ever returned from the unknown realm which lay beyond to say whether or not each one there had his equal chance to live. *That* was the one great question.

He had been born to the life of folded hands, and this it was which had killed him. Perhaps out there in the darkness—and then he realized the real darkness of his present world was now falling upon him like a pall. Already to the northwest the great mountains towered—dark shadows against lighter ones like—he searched his brain—like those Rembrandts he had seen abroad. To the man there alone in his desolate world, the mountains seemed strikingly formidable in their sombrous outline. Behind them, in an adamant setting, the glistening stars shone cold and steadfast. Out of the deadly hush of the desert below him came the sharp, quick yelp of a coyote. The mournful sound crashed against his overwrought brain and in a half-delirium he raised his own voice in weird mimicry. From crag to crag the echo reverberated and he cackled in glee at the sound.

Throwing himself from the horse, the man stumbled along the rock-strewn ground. Carefully picking her way behind him, followed the mare—instinctively seeking the companionship which all living things crave when lost to civilization. Still the man stumbled on, tripping here and there and occasionally falling over some boulder hidden by the darkness. He sang a ribald song and the music which burst from his parched lips was as the agonized wail of a lost soul. Then he blasphemed, screaming aloud his defiling oaths. Then there was an interval when reason came to him fleetingly, but as a flood of light, and he was torn with longing for man's help and his fear of the grave's blackness. Once when he plunged to his knees he remained in this position for a moment, and then from a heart fairly bursting with anguish he uttered the cry of his childhood:

"Mother! Mother!"

He was still in this position when the mare came upon him. She snorted when she touched her cold nose to his cheek. He sprang to his feet in a frenzy of fear and with shriek after shriek rushed on, only to trip and fall headlong to the earth. Again the mare came upon him as he lay unconscious. Half in play she nibbled at his clothing. Finding no response, she lowered her head and stood without moving, and the night came with mantle black, covering both man and beast from view.

From the east the dawn came softly, flooding the higher strata between the ridges into red gashes, then kindling dull beacon-fires on the nearer hilltops with magical hand and gradually, as though growing beneath the brush of a master painter, the looming, gaunt, gray-headed sentinels in the distance took on exquisite layers of color—first rose, then amber and then gold—the brilliant gold of a kingly diadem. As the light grew stronger it could be seen there was little vegetation save for an occasional manzanita bush, clumps of chimisal and a few stunted pines far-spaced and grasping life feebly with

their roots clutching the interstices of the rocks. On the trail behind, the puffy alkali dust remained stationary—there was not a breath of air—even the sharp spires of the thin pines above were as motionless as the needles of pigment trees on a canvas, without even a tremor to their balsamic pinnacles.

From the desert came a loathsome-looking buzzard, heavily flapping his way over the ridge until he reached a spot in the air above where the man lay flattened on the ground. Beside the man still stood the horse. For a moment the buzzard circled in swirling rings, in each circle working higher and higher until at last it floated high overhead, a mere dot in an azure firmament, but *always* soaring directly overhead!

Where the man lay was about the center of a little rock-ribbed plain, fifty or sixty feet in diameter. Through the middle of this small plateau ran a gully in which a mass of scrubby underbrush had gained a foothold and flourished in spite of the blistering droughts of summer and the bitter winds which came with the snow and the sleet. To the left was a cañon and over its wooded depths a thin column of black smoke ascended steadily, climbing high into the blue sky above in a monotonous spiral. The sun ascended to the zenith, and still the man lay unconscious.

Back on the trail below rose a cloud, which at first glance appeared to be smoke. In fifteen minutes this smoke could be seen rising behind a dark line of horsemen and in another fifteen minutes their number could be made out to be a dozen. They rode at a fast pace, the dust rolling to the rear in a heavy mass and occasionally they urged their ponies on with spur and high, penetrating voices. Now and then the noon-day sun shot athwart the little company and deflected from the metal on the riders' carbines and revolver butts in dazzling radiance.

On the plateau above, the man rose to a sitting posture. The horse whinnied. He reached for her bridle and with this help drew himself to his feet. For a moment he staggered and was forced to lean against the mare for

support. He shook as with the ague and tried to climb into the saddle, but the effort was useless.

"No chance, old girl, no chance," he muttered. "This is—where—we part." Raising his hand he brought it down with a resounding slap upon her flank and she trotted away from him.

"Good horse," he mumbled thickly, "our acquaintance—has—been—short—but pleasant." His eyes dropped to his feet and then became glued upon a footprint in the earth near where he stood. It had been made by himself the night before, but to his distorted imagination it was the smooth, pigeon-toed track of a moccasin. Keen-eyed and alert he dropped to his knees and viewed the impression with the thinking mind of a frontier scout. With lowered lids and his insane imagination running riot, he pondered rapidly over it. Then in his mind's eye he could see the mountain-trail of the night before in its dense and dark obscurity. Now about him dim objects seemed to be moving stealthily, vague and indefinable as shadows and yet strangely resembling the figures of Indians. He raised his head abruptly and with eyes which had the cold glitter of newly polished steel, menacingly peered into the scant underbrush and around boulders for a glimpse of a bare, painted leg, a dirty blanket, or a crest of waving feathers.

"Ah!" he breathed, and quickly reached for the imaginary revolver at his hip.

On the knoll above he had seen a silent file of men moving in a tireless procession and coming upon him doggedly.

"Come on, you damned red devils!" he yelled.

A curl of dark hair left his brow and fluttered to the ground, as from the line of men on the knoll above sprang little mushroom puffs of white smoke and then several staccato reports split the quiet air.

"A pretty good shot—that!" laughed the man and, turning, he plunged into the narrow chaparral. As he bent over and ran panting through the under-

brush in the gully, little columns of dust rose magically from the sloping rock above him like puffs of escaping steam, and pieces of metal, looking like crumpled tinfoil, spatted whitely against the dark granite, flaking and chipping the rock down upon him in small showers. On to the end of the gully he ran and then stopped as he came abruptly upon the wall of granite before him. About him the leaden bees still z-z-zimmed viciously, and then there came a pause followed by the clatter of iron-shod feet. A lariat sang in the air and settled over his shoulders. It was drawn taut with a quick jerk, throwing him flat on his face. Then one of the "Indians" spoke:

"Well, I'll be damned! A hoss-thief without a coat an' hat an'—*no gun!*"

CHAPTER III.

On the jagged ridge half way up the mountain range nestled a comfortable-looking house. Indeed, it seemed a most pretentious dwelling for this wild country. It was of two stories, built substantially and painted, with screens at the windows and a wide veranda facing the north. To the east stretched the boundless desert, a silent, foreboding ocean of alkali with its level surface calm and unruffled except here and there by the spiny cactus. In front of the house, on a space cleared of boulders, was stretched a bright-colored awning which afforded protection from the glaring sun to a table and several easy chairs—chairs which bespoke the quiet luxury and expensive handiwork of the effete East. On the porch stood another table and more chairs.

These latter chairs just now claimed the close attention of a Chinese servant who was vigorously flapping the furniture with a dust-cloth. When gazing at this Chinaman, one was bound to stop and take another long look. At first glance there were the usual characteristics of his race depicted on his immobile countenance. But a closer scrutiny brought to light the more finely chiseled features, the steady, penetra-

ting eyes, the high forehead and the tall, erect figure—characteristics absolutely foreign to the servile coolie. The hand which played the dust-cloth had the tapering, well-groomed fingers of a woman and bore out his story that in his own country he was a prince, and that he had fled to America to save his head from the enmity of the empress dowager. Once he stopped and sniffed the contents of a decanter on the table. Across his face flickered an expression of amused disdain.

"The Americans are a queer people," he said, half aloud. "They drink whisky in a hot country. It is a bad custom. A cool mind must have a cool brain. Whisky is a fuel which fires the mind and burns the body."

He walked from the veranda to the awning with a free, easy stride and once more plied the dust-cloth. He paused to gaze out across the desert and noted that the sun was now soaring high in the heavens. His eyes searched the yellow trail bending around the curving flank of the mountain, but no living thing greeted his vision.

To the right of him a man opened the door of the house and stepped upon the veranda. The newcomer drew his handkerchief across his forehead and then meditatively stroked his drooping, iron-gray mustache. A man well past middle age, and sturdy and vigorous he seemed, albeit his good-natured expression was affected by the lack of healthy color to his skin.

He descended the steps from the veranda and approached the Chinese servant.

"Hello, Choo," he said. The other paused for a moment and replied in a well-modulated voice:

"Good afternoon, Colonel Breckenridge." He spoke excellent English, although he paused between words.

Both looked up as a man approached from the direction of the corral. The servant moved over toward the veranda.

"Ah, good afternoon, Louis," said Colonel Breckenridge, as the visitor reached the awning and then seated himself at the other side of the table.

"How are you, colonel?" he an-

swered. "You are still true to your old friend?"—he smiled and nodded toward the decanter on the table.

"Well, I should say so," said the colonel. "Pretty good kind of a friend to have around, isn't it?" he queried as he poured into the glass. "Say when!"

"What a thing to ask me, colonel," laughed Louis Taylor. "We both come from the same good old State and you know just as well as I do that in our Kentucky language there is no such word as 'when.' My best regards!" As they drank slowly, and with infinite gratification, the Chinese servant quietly left them and disappeared around the corner of the house. However, not until he had taken a long, critical view of Taylor.

"I came over this afternoon," said Taylor, "to see if there was any news of the horse you had stolen yesterday. Have you heard anything yet?" The colonel brought his clenched fist down on the table with a bang, and into his face leaped the flame of wrath.

"No, sir—no, sir!" he stormed, "not a cussed thing—nor from the dastardly scoundrel who rode her off. Of course," he added, closing his teeth with a revengeful click, "any man who steals a horse in this here country is sure to dangle on the end of a rope and this makes three horses that have been stolen in this vicinity in the last ten days. So it's a sure bet that if they catch the rascal who stole my mare they'll hang him mighty quick. You can no more separate a horse-thief from the justice of this country than you can separate the sun from its heat. No, sir, if he was governor of this Territory it would not save him."

"Yes, I guess there is no doubt of that, but don't you think he had an infernal nerve?"

"Nerve? Nerve!" exploded the colonel, "I should say he did, but what drives me clean, plumb loony is thinking of the time I had reaching home afoot. I *guess* I didn't get a gruelling? I didn't have the least idea in the world of what was to happen. I was inside the station sending a wire East when the Overland Limited rolled in. The

mare stood unhitched behind the station—you know, she'll stand anywhere and is afraid of nothing on this earth. Well, the telegraph-operator told me afterward—you know, I let fly a couple of times at him—I had to shoot high because I daren't plug the mare, and I missed him—and, as I said before, the operator told me that this—this—miserable Yankee thief—just lit out of the train bareheaded and onto my mare without as much as saying aye, yes or no!"

"It's a strange proceeding," mused Taylor, "and sounds more like the act of a crazy man than the work of a rational being."

"Do you know," replied the colonel, "I thought of that very thing myself, but I concluded, after all, that any man who would steal a mare like mine was not crazy but just a good judge of horse-flesh. Well, I waited for an hour, first stewing and then melting drop by drop in that furnace of a depot, but there was no getting away from it—I had to hit the trail for home on foot. Can you imagine my feelings—walking through those miles of yellow alkali dust, in a broiling sun, with the thermometer one hundred and ten? Louis, the hereafter has no terrors for me—on that trail I suffered the tortures of the damned—I was parboiled, blistered and roasted to a shriveling frazzle and now there remains for me only one object in life, which is to see that horse-thief brought back and——" Here the colonel paused while he searched his brain for a torturing punishment amply to fit the enormity of the offense.

"*Boiled in oil!*" he fairly roared. Taylor smiled at the colonel's outburst, but he was careful to hide his amusement from his irate and belligerent companion.

"It was a shame, colonel," he said, "but it will be some satisfaction to you if he is caught and brought back. Do you think they will get him?"

"Get him?—he's caught now like a coyote in a trap. Snapshot Skinner and his men have telephoned and telegraphed everywhere and the railroad,

people are watching out all along the line. There isn't a chance for him to break through into another county."

"Then it looks as though they would be able to catch him, doesn't it? Do you suppose they'll bring him back here?"

"I reckon they will."

"If they do Betty will have an opportunity of seeing a hanging—if she cares to. I am assuming, of course," said Taylor, "that her professional interest will be sufficiently aroused by the event to cause her to attend the affair. Although I really believe, colonel, that even this hanging would not awaken her to even the slightest sign of emotion."

"You may be right, Louis," replied the colonel reflectively. "I don't know as if the prospect of witnessing a hanging would be of interest to her—even from the standpoint of a psychological study. Ever since she quit school she has been like one not of this world. She seems to be sleeping among her books. I think it's too bad—I cannot understand it."

"Yes, Betty is a cold proposition," said Taylor. "I hope you don't mind my speaking bluntly of her, even if she is your daughter?"

"Not at all, Louis," answered the colonel, "not at all, but while I feel somewhat as you do, still I don't want you to do her the injustice to misjudge her. She may have a freezing temperament and she may be a cold character but I know that—beneath—she has a heart as warm as that desert out yonder, and another thing—I am perfectly sure of her loyalty and devotion. I have never told you all the circumstances of our coming out here and the cause of our remaining in this miserable spot. It is time you should know and I mean to tell you now." He paused for an instant, but before he resumed the Chinese servant had noiselessly stepped through the doorway to the veranda and apparently was busy with the glasses on the table. They did not notice him, but had they done so they might have seen he was bright-eyed and alert—with ears wide open.

"Our leaving Kentucky was for my own sole good and absolutely insisted upon by Betty. You see, when her mother died, Betty had just entered a Northern college. When she went there she had all the new-fangled ideas about independence, advanced education, et cetera, and when she graduated she was tied hand and foot to theories and logic, and all such rot. That was the time I was preparing Skyrocket for the Good Will stakes and one morning—no doubt you will recall the incident—the colt in an excess of joy belted me with his heels and cracked two of my ribs. It was a very painful accident and as nothing seemed to relieve me the blithering idiot of a doctor finally gave me morphin to ease the pain. That was the beginning. I took to morphin like a duck to water and—here I am!"

"Ah, now I see," exclaimed Taylor. "It was morphin which brought you here!"

"Yes, morphin did it. All this time Betty was studying medicine and when she came home with her degree and found me a slave to morphin she gave up all hope of a career and came out here with me—out here where I could forget old associations and old temptations—out here where she could care for me, and here we've fought it all out."

"But you've won?"

"Yes, thank God, Louis, we've won, but nobody will ever realize the terrible fight I have had. Therefore, we shall return to Kentucky very soon. I am deliberately disclosing the family skeleton because—I don't want you to get discouraged, because I am aware of your hopes and ambitions—because there should be nothing between us now for—I want you to win her." There came a crash from the veranda. In some manner Choo had let slip a glass and it had smashed to pieces on the floor of the porch.

Taylor and the colonel arose hastily and both looked to whence came the sound only to behold the servant bent over and calmly picking up the broken pieces.

"Confound that Chinaman!" cried

Taylor angrily. "Between his uncanny placidity and his unexpected interruptions he is forever getting on my nerves. I haven't been able to talk with Betty lately but what he is about on some pretext or other. I'm beginning to think he is not so disinterested as he appears."

"Nonsense, Louis," laughed the colonel. "Choo is just a model servant, that's all."

"However, colonel," replied Taylor, "I am very grateful for what you have just said to me. I am glad to know just where I stand with you in the matter and it will make me proceed with renewed confidence. Do you mind walking over to the crusher? It looks as though my mining proposition is bound to be a big winner. We have tapped another vein and are getting out some splendid specimens."

"Why, of course, Louis, I shall be glad to, and I want to congratulate you upon your good fortune. Let us go and look it over."

They passed from view unaware that as long as they were in sight the Chinese servant remained, standing motionless upon the veranda with his eyes fastened upon them.

CHAPTER IV.

An hour later from within the house a girl pushed open the door leading to the front veranda and halted upon the porch, while her gaze circled the fringe of boulders, the scrubby vegetation and the appalling vastness of the desert, in calm, indifferent sweeps. The whole place seemed uninhabited and forsaken save for the dull roar of wheels and the grinding crunch of the crusher at the mine, the location of which was marked some little distance to the left by the jagged gashes in the hillside and the sprawling, irregular-shaped buildings clustering about the yawning shaft entrance. She seated herself listlessly and dropped a book and a small package upon the table at her elbow.

In her face was the searching, far-seeing look of one gazing on the scenes of another planet, the look of one older

than her twenty-five years. The delicate, olive-tinted skin, the strong, regular features, the slumbering eyes of midnight hue, the wide, placid brow, weighted by a mass of hair of the tint and gloss of a raven's wing, all denoted that Betty Breckenridge was fully equipped, mentally, to view her present sphere with the serene wisdom of a higher intelligence. Surely an attractive face, in spite of its lassitude of expression, but her figure was one to claim the eye of the beholder. Above the average height, and of vigorous, superb proportions, even in repose it suggested powers of strength and action, and the symmetrical lines were accentuated by a soft, clinging gown.

With clasped hands she sat quietly for a long, long time, looking out and beyond the vivid sunshine, with eyes which saw not, thinking, thinking.

Her father's unfortunate appetite had claimed her attention and then, spurred on by a keen sense of duty and filial devotion, she had employed her untried professional skill with most gratifying results. This appetite she had fully appeased. So what lay before her now? A return to the old place in Kentucky? And then what? The work of a physician among the widely scattered inhabitants of her home town, or the more pretentious practise of a city doctor? Somehow neither appealed to her. Carefully her trained mind reviewed the situation. Along *what* line should henceforth be her life's work—*what* was her proper place from now on as a mere, infinitesimal atom in the infinite, never-ending development of the universe? Oh, for some sign; oh, for the proper guidance to lead her along the right path in the wonderful scheme of existence!

Then she pondered—and the thought came as a shock—if she were, after all, only destined to the common, humdrum lot of her sex. Was it marriage—that bounden state of service, a life of rearing children, a life of routine, of care and of retarded mental growth? No—the very idea was intensely repellent! In spite of herself, however, her mind returned and lingered over this very

subject. And if a marriage finally—well, with whom? The ideals of her girlhood remained, true they were now hazy and indistinct, but there had been a time when those ideals had taken human form and lured her to thoughts of a life companion—of a partner—yes, of a mate! And who was the boy? Again the thought was a shock. It was—Louis Taylor! Across her inscrutable face flitted a little smile.

Poor Louis! Rapidly her mind flew over the events of her girlhood. Louis Taylor was a cousin and from the first had claimed an undisputed right to her undivided attentions by reason of this relationship. He had been a real companion in the days of his callow youth. She recalled his unswerving pursuit through her world of dancing-parties, drawing-rooms, and even following her to this desolate spot. He had been constant, she reflected, notwithstanding her own irresolution, her varying inclinations which tentatively touched many fads, all of which had fallen short of being permanent except one and this one, the study of medicine, she knew, was bound to follow the inglorious fate of its predecessors. The realization of this made her wince and yet she bristled as she recollected that Louis had always viewed her vagaries with a superior, ill-suppressed toleration.

She marveled he had never asked her to be his wife, that he had never declared his love for her. Of course, she knew he had always cared for her as he never would, or never could, for any other, but what had silenced his avowal? He had often heard her say that she should never marry and no doubt he believed it. It was well he did. Not that her objection to Louis as a husband was unsurmountable, but there was one habit he had acquired which made him a remote possibility. This habit was immoderate drinking, a habit which 'did not make him repulsive but just unsafe.

Her reverie was broken abruptly by Choo, who came around the house, paused on seeing her, then crossed to the awning and picked up the empty glasses. Miss Breckenridge arose lan-

guidly and approached the servant. She nodded toward the glasses and asked indifferently:

"Has father had a caller?"

"Yes," he replied, "Mr. Taylor. Your father and Mr. Taylor have gone to the mine." As he spoke a matronly, sweet-faced woman appeared on the veranda and came toward them. The girl seated herself in the same listless manner.

"I should think, aunty," she said, "that stuffy house would have driven you out long ago."

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Marcum, "it is quite close in there, but I never believe in putting off housework or—that *any* male was meant to perform the work of a chambermaid." Mrs. Marcum's jaw set perceptibly, and over Choo's face flickered a queer smile, flickered again and went out. "My," she continued, "doesn't this breeze feel good, though? Where has your father gone? I don't see him! about anywhere."

"Choo says he has gone over to the mine with Louis." There was a pause. When Miss Breckenridge spoke again Choo was on his way to the house with the decanter and glasses in hand, but he halted when she said:

"I am sorry to have missed Louis."

"I wonder if you are really sorry, Betty?" asked her aunt.

"Of course I am sorry—as I should be to miss any friend who called, but—that is all." Choo proceeded on his journey toward the rear of the house. "Besides," added the girl, "we are second cousins and that means something, doesn't it?" Mrs. Marcum laughed a little and shook a chiding finger at her.

"Betty, Betty—you are evasive. I do trust you—you will care for Louis? In fact, I have always hoped so."

"What nonsense, aunty dear—as if I could care for any man. No, I do not seem to be the marrying kind."

"Just the same you ought to be," replied her aunt with spirit. "I say it is the *duty* of every good woman."

"A woman truly good has many, many duties," rejoined Miss Brecken-

ridge. There was a quiet assurance in her tone.

Choo appeared, carrying a pan of potatoes. He picked out a flat, low-lying boulder at the side of the trail just beyond the corner of the house and, after leisurely seating himself, began to pare them.

"Oh, Betty," continued Mrs. Marcum, "you do nothing but read and think—and no one but the Almighty himself knows what you are thinking about." Mrs. Marcum paused to watch the effect of her remarks, only to find the girl gazing serenely across the desert with a look which foretold nothing. "Well," she added, rather helplessly, "I'm *so* glad we shall soon return home. How I want to see the blue grass and the ngiers!"

"No more than I do, aunty; I'm weary of looking at that desert out there. And only last night I had an experience which filled me with the terror of its vastness. Before getting in bed I sat at the open window and then looked into the night. The world was as calm and as peaceful as a day in June. To the north I could see the faint outline of the mountains and below the less distinct shadow of the ridge surrounding that little plateau, the center of which was used as a place for human sacrifice by the ancient Aztecs. As my eyes lingered on this spot a sudden sensation of lurking oppression, of impending harm—intangible and nameless but present and ominous, swept over me in a suffocating wave. This was followed by the sound of some one caling. It seems absurd, but I *know* I heard a voice. Do you believe in premonition, aunty?"

"Premonition—fiddlesticks!" sniffed her aunt. "What is to be—will be."

Choo, for several moments past, had been looking along the trail which came from the north and now he stood erect and shaded his eyes with one hand. Miss Breckenridge saw him.

"What is it, Choo?" she asked.

"The posse is coming along trail."

"It's probably the vigilantes who went after that horse-thief this morn-

ing. Have they got anybody?" she asked, really disinterested.

"Can't tell—too far away," Choo replied briefly. Mrs. Marcum arose.

"Well, some day, Betty, you'll meet the right man," she said, "and if you do," tossing her head emphatically, "by ginger, I'll bet he'll get you without half trying."

"The posse does not ride fast," informed Choo, who still stood watching the trail. Miss Breckenridge arose slowly.

"Perhaps they have caught the horse-thief and there may be a hanging," she said; "how interesting," in a voice absolutely expressionless. Then, turning to Mrs. Marcum: "I am sorry to vex you, aunty, but the man I could love and marry—is not yet born," whereupon Mrs. Marcum disappeared within the house, slamming the door behind her with a resounding bang.

CHAPTER V.

Miss Breckenridge thought she detected a fleeting smile on the usually impassive face of her Chinese servant as she turned to him.

"Bring me that book and package from the veranda, Choo," she said. He carried them to her under the awning and she again seated herself with the unchanging, listless manner. The servant resumed his station where he could watch the trail.

"How near is the posse, Choo?" she asked in a bored tone, speaking to him over her shoulder.

"They have stopped at the mine," he answered.

"What are they doing there?"

"Watering the horses. I can see your father's horse."

"Is any one riding her?"

"Yes, a strange man—he is without hat or coat—and has his arms tied behind."

"Then they have captured the horse-thief. Why did they bring him here, I wonder?" she inquired, but still showing no interest.

"To—to—what is the word I want?—ah, yes—to identify the horse."

"Oh, yes, of course," she remarked indifferently. She took up the package from the table and sought to break the cord which bound it, but being unsuccessful in this she turned to the servant.

"Have you a knife?" she asked, still talking over her shoulder. The next instant she was surprised to see him at her side with a knife in his hand from which a long blade sprang when he pressed a spring. She took the knife from him.

"What an ingenious contrivance, and such a vicious weapon, too. Is this your name on the handle?" she asked.

"Yes, it is my name. It is a good knife. It could be useful or—dangerous." She cut the string on the package and began to unfold the paper covering when her father and Louis Taylor came toward her from the direction of the trail. She closed the knife-blade, but retained it in her hand, absent-mindedly. Her father came close and spoke to her in a low voice.

"This will not be a pleasant scene, Betty. Are you going to remain?" he asked.

"Why not?" she answered, still unmoved. "It may be something worth remembering—these final moments in the life of a criminal. It is all lawless and wrong, I know, yet it is the custom of the country."

Now to their ears came the soft cluff, cluff, cluff, cluff of horses' hoofs in the thick cushion of dust along the trail and then a loud roar of hearty laughter reached them. In another moment the posse appeared around the bend of the trail. Ahead rode "Snap-shot" Skinner, leader of the vigilantes. From his belt a rope extended to the halter of Colonel Breckenridge's mare and astride the mare was the man who had ridden her off from the depot platform the previous afternoon. The man's head was lowered so that his chin rested on his breast and occasionally he swayed in the saddle. When within speaking-distance Skinner pulled up his horse and turned to those behind.

"Wait here, boys," he commanded. "No use for th' hull shootin' match t'

mosey into th' house yonder. I'll have th' colonel look his mare over an' be back to you directly." He rode straight to the house, with the colonel's mare and her rider following.

"Good arfternoon, Miss Betty, good arfternoon," Colonel Breckenridge, greeted Skinner. "Is this your mare, colonel?" he asked, taking in both man and horse with a wide sweep of his arm. The man still weaved in the saddle and his head remained lowered.

"You bet she's mine! I'd know her among a million of the rabbits they ride around yere. Guess she's the only thoroughbred in this country." Then recollecting his martyrdom of yesterday, the colonel turned to the man with a snarl of wrath. "So you're the one who's responsible for my eating a bushel of alkali dust yesterday evening while I was walking on the blistering lid of hell?" Receiving no answer the colonel turned to Skinner. "Where did you catch him?" he asked. Before a reply could be given a second loud burst of laughter came from the posse. Skinner saw a bit of color creep to Miss Breckenridge's face, and the sudden flash in her dark eyes as she trained them coldly on his men. He made haste to explain their mirth.

"Yer see," he said, with an apologetic nod toward them, "I—I—guess Burro Bill must be a-tellin' some o' his funny stories t' th' boys. He's a most amusin' little cuss. He kept us all hollerin' comin' back with this hoss-thief here." Noticing that they did not appear to be interested in the humorous side of the affair, he continued: "Oh, where did we git him? Up on th' ridge across from Buckeye Valley. There's a little plain up there where they say th' Aztecs used to burn up one another as a' offerin' to th' sun. He started t' run but went up against th' cliff an' we roped him."

"Have you found out anything about him—do yo' know who he is?" asked Taylor.

"At first he talked like a crazy man. Said he s'posed we wuz goin' t' burn him at th' stake. Must 'a' thought we wuz Indians."

"But why should he think that?" broke in the girl.

"I don't know, Miss Betty, 'cept that he'd had a tough night of it. He must 'a' got lost an' went a long time without water. He wuz all in first, but a couple o' drinks straightened him out. Howsomever, he's been a-twitchin' an' a-shakin' ever since we started back but," added Snapshot with glowing pride, "th' mare ain't hurt none!"

"Won't he say anything about himself?" asked Colonel Breckenridge in wonder.

"He won't say nothin' about himself 'cept that he stole th' mare an' deserves hangin'."

"Where do you intend to—ah, ahem! —to—to execute him?" asked Taylor.

"Over in Dead Man's Gulch. We just hitch th' lariat t' an old sluiceway an' lead th' mare from under him. It's very easy an' simple."

"Why don't you have a scaffold?" demanded the colonel with rising wrath. "I don't know as I want my horse to be used for a——"

A reckless laugh broke from the man and for the first time he raised his head and displayed a face of the color of parchment. Again he laughed, long and bitterly. Then he spoke in a voice which came jerkily in spite of an apparent effort to control it:

"I was—always—economical, that is why—I bring—my—scaffold with me." Then a spasm seized him and he shook.

"Yes," replied Skinner, "an' it costs more'n most scaffolds does. Well, I guess that's all—an' we'll be a-movin' on." Again a loud shout of joyous laughter came from the posse and when it died out the girl stepped forward and spoke. Her voice rang with a quiet command.

"I want you to wait!" she said. She moved nearer the prisoner and addressed him softly:

"You are going to die before sundown. Is there anything you would like—is there nothing I may do for you?" For the first time the man took notice of her and then for a long while his eyes held her gaze.

"Yes, thank you," he said in a husky.

voice, "if you will be so good as to have your servant give me a drink of water." In response to a quick gesture from her Choo hurriedly entered the house and returned with a glass of water. Once again the posse broke out in a laugh, but it was stilled suddenly when Skinner turned to them and roared:

"Quit yer yowlin'!—yer pack o' gigglin' idiots!"

Choo started toward the man to give him the water, but the girl intercepted him and motioned for a chair to be placed beside the mare. Choo brought the chair and she stepped easily upon it. She raised the glass to his lips and he drank the water in short, nervous gulps. Handing back the glass to Choo she took a handkerchief from her belt and slowly wiped the man's cracked and swollen lips, meanwhile looking him through and through. His eyes dropped.

"Who are you?" she asked in a kindly voice. He made no answer. Unconsciously her professional instinct came to her aid. Her right hand still held Choo's knife. The other hand she dropped to the man's knee and gave him a little shake.

"Who are you?" she repeated.

"I—I am just what you see—a horse-thief."

"You are not telling the whole truth—you know what I mean!" He remained silent. "Have you no one to whom you wish to send word," she continued in a low voice, "no message?—*somebody cares!*"

"I have no real friend in the world"—here his voice fell to a whisper—"I do not deserve one."

"You know—the—the end is quite near," she said soothingly. "Can you not face it tranquilly? You are trembling—I don't think it is fear."

"No, I don't fear death itself. It is the dread of death that stings."

"Do you realize there is but little time to prepare?"

"No preparation is necessary," he answered, and after a supreme effort to control himself, he went on more calmly: "It will be simply a departure without return. It is only the thought of

the final scene which clings and—hurts. I should like it better—if I might leave—as a child drops to sleep.” She turned to those about her and again her voice rang clearly:

“I want the privilege of asking this man one question—it is a question for his ears alone. Will you all kindly move away a little?” Her father, Taylor and Skinner walked a few paces out of earshot and looked away.

Reaching up, the girl gently drew his head down with her left arm and whispered hurriedly in his ear. He nodded his head affirmatively and had no sooner done so than she sprang the knife open and drew the keen blade through the rope which bound his arms behind his back. He stiffened slightly, but if he was aware of what she had done he made no sign. His arms remained in the same position. She shut the blade into place, turned and said coolly:

“Father, I am through, thank you.” Colonel Breckenridge assisted his daughter down from the chair. She looked at the prisoner to see his eyes searching hers in a bright, compelling gaze.

“Good-by,” she said simply, but there was a direct challenge in the look she shot him. If he caught it he made no other response than to say quietly:

“Au revoir!”

Snapshot Skinner cleared his throat with a mighty sound, stuffed an enormous chew of tobacco into his cheek, and cried:

“All right, boys, we’re comin’ right along!” Taking hold of the mare’s bridle, he led her out where the rest of the posse were waiting. Choo followed slowly behind. At the house they stood and watched the file of men going along the trail until it disappeared in the direction of Dead Man’s Gulch. The last to be seen was the Chinese servant, aimlessly shuffling the heavy dust in the rear of the little cavalcade.

For several moments quietness reigned. Colonel Breckenridge and Taylor sat under the awning and smoked their cigars in silence. At the edge of the trail where it passed the house stood the girl facing the east, her

hands clasped behind her. Her attitude denoted thought and preoccupation and yet, somehow, a strange transformation seemed to have taken place all in a moment. The fingers which interlocked gripped each other fiercely, the supple, beautiful body was as rigid as a graven image. Lassitude and indifference had disappeared with the speed of light and in their place had come a new and inexplicable emotion which held her in its grasp and made every fiber of her being tremble with a wild desire for action. Behind her the setting sun was slowly sinking below the mountains. Its softening rays lit up every full, symmetrical line of her figure and crowned her hair with the sheen of a diadem. Suddenly Colonel Breckenridge arose, removed the half-smoked cigar from his mouth, and threw it violently on the ground. Then he swore with picturesque volubility.

“And I say, sir,” fairly shouted the colonel, “that to consider a horse, no matter how good a horse—I say, to consider such a horse worth more than a man’s life, that is, of course, worth more than a *white man’s* life, is an outrage. Yes, sir, I repeat, sir—a damned outrage!” The girl never moved and remained still quiescent after her father had stamped into the house and slammed the door behind him. Finally Taylor spoke to her:

“Betty,” he called. She made no reply and he called again:

“Betty!” this time louder and she turned to him. “I’m—I’m very sorry you saw this. It has been a ghastly ordeal. I wonder that you are not thoroughly unstrung over it.”

“Oh, no. However, it is too bad that such things must be. Will you go in,” she asked, coming toward him, “or is it pleasanter outside?”

“Let us stay here, please. For some time past I have been wanting to say something to you, Betty, and I should like to say it now, if you care to listen?”

“Why, certainly, Louis, I am listening.”

“You must know by this time, Betty, how it is with me, but up to the pres-

ent I never thought I was able to offer you the kind of home you ought to have. Now my new mine has made me rich and, if you care for it, a life of luxury is before you. Why, I bought this mine and came here for the sole reason of being near you. From a boy up I've loved you all my life. Will you marry me? Can't you care for me, Betty?" She did not look at him, but seemed to be intently listening. "Betty," he said again, and she gave a little start.

"I—I beg your pardon, Louis, I was thinking. You are not—really—in earnest?" He nodded affirmatively. "I—I am very sorry, Louis. Have I ever—by word or look—showed, or led you to think, that—that I——"

"No, you have never encouraged me, but surely you must have known, all these years back, how I felt? But I will not be impatient—I will wait. At least, give me some hope, Betty?" She made no answer and he added: "Is there anything about me to which you object?" Still no reply. "Betty!" he called, more sharply.

"I—I beg your pardon, Louis," she hastened to say, "I—I am not myself this evening. You were saying——"

"Have I any faults to which you object?" anxiously.

"Yes—there is one."

"And what is that one, Betty?"

"You ought to know what it is—I have spoken of it to you before."

"I ought to know," he repeated and pondered a moment. "Oh," he exclaimed, "do you mean my—my drinking?"

"Yes—that is what I mean."

The sun had disappeared, a huge orange of fire, and now dusk was upon them. A figure moved along the trail and stopped when near the house. It was Choo. For a moment or two he stood and listened, then he tiptoed to the veranda and remained there—motionless.

"Why—why," continued Taylor in a surprised voice, "I'm sure I don't drink more than—any gentleman should, do I? Is that the only reason, Betty? I really believe you are not listening to

me at all. Betty!" She turned nervously. "Is there any other reason, Betty?" he demanded.

"Yes, there is another, but please don't ask me to tell you what it is."

"Come, Betty, be fair with me—tell me what the other is."

On the veranda the Chinese servant reached for the front door and noiselessly opened it. Then her reply came, even and cold:

"I do not love you—I never could!" With a hard push Choo banged the door shut. The girl gave a quick gasp of fright and one hand went to her bosom.

"Is—is that you, Choo?" she inquired, in a voice which trembled.

"Yes," answered the servant. She turned to Taylor and said:

"Will you please excuse me, Louis? I—I am—not well this evening." Without waiting for his answer she left him and hurried into the house. Taylor was fairly shaking with passion when he faced Choo at the veranda steps.

"What do you mean," he asked in a tense voice, "you sneaking, spying heathen? Don't you suppose I know you have been watching me for a month? Now, look here!—I want you to understand I'll have no more of it! If you dare to bother me again in this manner, I'll—I'll squeeze that yellow windpipe of yours until you wish you had attended to your own business! Do you hear?" The servant eyed him calmly and replied scornfully:

"Do you fear something—why should I watch you?"

"Fear? *Fear!* And what need I fear from you—you educated—half-breed?" The other seemed to grow in stature and his words came with the resonant, convincing sound of truth:

"I—am a prince of royal blood and you—you—call *me* a mongrel!" Here he smiled. "When Cæsar drove his chariots across England *my* people were known, but—no matter! And *you* would assault *me*? In Constantinople I have stroked the dogs, the city scavengers, but to touch one like you would be a lasting disgrace to my ancestors! In my country I would order one of

my coolies to beat you!" With a half-suppressed oath Taylor raised his arm.

"What are you saying—you pig-eyed Chinese nigger!" From within the house the colonel's voice called:

"Oh, Louis!—can you come in a moment?" Colonel Breckenridge opened the door and saw him. "Here you are, eh?—having a little private confab with Choo? The chess-board looks lonesome—come on in!"

"All right, colonel, I'll go you." He brushed by the servant with a scowl. Choo merely raised his delicate eyebrows and descended to the ground where he paused with head bowed as though in deep thought. When he raised his head he spoke softly:

"She said she did not love him, and never could. Then she will marry him—never—because she—is that kind." Still impassive, he turned calmly when Miss Breckenridge spoke in a low voice from the open door:

"Here, Choo—I forgot to return your knife—take it, please." He received it without comment and she closed the door quietly behind her. For a moment or two he remained in the same position and then raised his head abruptly. Along the trail came the sound of a galloping horse. Nearer and nearer it came, at a terrific burst of speed, around the bend at unabated pace and stopped in front of the house, when the rider rose in his stirrups and yanked the animal on its haunches. In another second the rider had thrown himself to earth. He caught sight of the motionless Chinaman and strode rapidly toward him. It was Snapshot Skinner. His breast heaved with excitement and his glance was wild-eyed.

"Hey, Chink!" he wheezed brokenly, "*did yer see anythin' o' that damn hoss-thief?*"

CHAPTER VI.

"Why don't yer speak, yer pizenized chunk of ocher?" demanded Snapshot, breathing deeply. "Didn't yer hear what I asked yer—have yer seen that white-livered hoss-thief?" Had it been daylight Skinner might have observed

that Choo's eyes shone with an unwonted sparkle; moreover he might also have observed that the servant's face had lighted with a quick smile of pleasure, but Choo's voice was as calm as ever when he answered:

"Escaped?"

"Yes, by God A'mighty, he's escaped. He broke loose an' on th' colonel's mare ag'in. I'd a-pumped daylight through th' cuss' back, I'd made a sieve of him, if I warn't a-scared o' shootin' up th' colonel's mare. But I'll git him! That mare left us like we wuz all picketed. He started this way. He's likely got into th' chaparral by this time. I hope th' mesquite and th' cactus rips his hide off. It's gittin' too dark t' do much 'fore mornin'. Don't tell th' colonel. I wouldn't have him know his hoss was gone ag'in fer a thousand dollars. I wonder how that thief got loose! I tied his arms myself. Say, Chink, if yer see a piece o' rope lyin' along th' trail anywhere in th' mornin'—hold it fer me."

"All right," said Choo. "If I find rope I'll—keep it!"

Choo's thin lips parted in a wide grin which was missed by Skinner, who turned and made for his horse, sprang into the saddle and was off again to the north. When the hoof-beats were echoing in the distance Choo lifted his blouse and took from beneath a short piece of rope. From his pocket he drew his knife and then, holding the rope in one hand and the knife in the other, he studied both critically. From the lower windows the curtains which were only half drawn allowed the rays of the lighted lamps within to play about him where he stood pondering over the knife and the rope. He was so engrossed in this that Miss Breckenridge had opened the front door and stepped lightly behind him before he was aware of her presence. Then he swung around and held the rope back of him.

"I was looking for my book, Choo. Ah, yes, I remember," she said, "I left it on the table under the awning, along with that package which came by mail to-day." To her surprise the servant

did not attempt to fetch the book. Instead he offered her the rope which he had kept concealed in back of him. At a glance she saw what it was and her eyes sought his with a sudden look of alarm. She took the rope from him.

"You—you saw?" she faltered.

"I saw nothing."

"You—found the rope?"

"I found nothing."

"You—know I did it?"

"I know nothing."

There was a pause and then—she offered him her hand. For an instant he stared at her hand, then stepped back and bent before her in a low bow. Turning without a word he walked rapidly out of sight around the house. With halting feet she made her way to the awning and clasped convulsively the back of a chair with one hand. Over the desert came the first beams of the moon, gradually spreading a silver cloth over the ghostly table-land.

"In spite of all I can do," she breathed, "I am frightfully nervous. *What* a deadly fascination that man had for me! I hope he escaped—he *must* escape! And he said—'au revoir.' Oh, if I do not hear something—if something does not happen soon—I believe I shall go distracted!" Involuntarily she gasped. Her ears had caught a long hissing sound which came from the trail behind her. What was it? Breathlessly she waited. Again she heard it. She looked in the direction whence it came and asked:

"Who is it?"

"You know who it is." There was no mistaking the voice.

"Where are you?"

"Beside the trail—in back of a boulder," and he raised his head.

"Keep out of sight! What made you come here?"

"You know that also."

"You should have ridden to Laramie, or Overlook, and taken a train—anywhere but here—it was your only chance."

"It is not what I should have done—it is what I *did* which matters now."

"Where is the horse?"

"Tied in the hollow below."

"The custom of these—these butchers—is to kill an escaped prisoner on sight. There is absolutely no hope for you."

"I am still alive. There is always a chance."

"You have not even a fighting chance!"

"Something tells me differently. I have had hope from the moment you gave me that drink of water. There was hope in the touch of your hand—hope in the sound of your voice. I was trembling and you knew it was not fear, because you whispered to me and asked me if it was morphin which was responsible for my condition and then—when the rope began to slip down and down until I knew my arms were free, and I could pull up the mare and turn the other way—when I had distanced them, I realized it was your hand which had caught and held me safe even at the edge of the grave."

"You were mad to return here! You are not strong."

"What does it matter how weak I am, nor how low in the depths?—I am not quite dead to all sense of gratitude. I could not do less than come back and thank you even though this visit shall bring certain death. How could you tell that I was a—that—that—infernal drug had me fast in its grasp?"

"I am a physician."

"A physician?" he lingered over the word and then into his voice sprang a tone of delight—of rapture. "Ah, I knew it—I knew it! Then in God's name give me some—quick—hurry—I am nearly raving crazy with the need of it!" He started toward her but stumbled and fell to the ground, arose weakly and started again, when her sudden command made him halt:

"Stay where you are! Then your craving for morphin brought you here?"

"Can't you be still more merciful? I have assured you it was also gratitude. Have you no pity? Give me some—at once—I beg of you!" She could tell by his strained voice, by the beating of his hands against his head and breast, that he was on the verge of a wild de-

lirium and yet there was something still *she—would* know.

"Was there nothing else to bring you back?"

"Yes—since you must know—I would have returned even if it meant a journey through hell itself to get here—just for—for one more sight of you." She drew a deep breath.

"Come down here beside me—hurry—be quiet!" Slowly he crawled on hands and knees to where she sat. From the package on the table she took a hypodermic syringe, then pulled his shirt-sleeve above the elbow. She paused in a tremor as her aunt called from the house:

"Betty—oh, Betty!"

"Yes—yes, aunty dear." Mrs. Marcum appeared at the screened window.

"Aren't you hungry? Everything is ready."

"In a few moments. Where are father and Louis?"

"Just finishing a silent battle over the chess-board. What are you doing out there all alone in the dark?"

"Well, I—I hardly know myself. Is Choo in the house?"

"No, he went out some little time ago."

"Please ring the gong for him."

"All right, but you ought to come in soon." Mrs. Marcum left the window. Quickly taking up his arm again she inserted the needle.

"Did you take it in this form?" she asked. Her voice was steady now.

"No, thank God," he replied, "I was not as bad as that." He rolled down his sleeve. "But I'm a poor kind of a stick to let you do all this." From within a loud gong clanged twice.

"Why should I not help you? You are ill and your life is in immediate danger," she said simply.

"It was not myself—it was of you I was thinking. What happens to me is of no account, but you—you have taken an unnecessary risk." From the trail came Choo, walking rapidly. He stood beside them and if he saw the man crouched at the girl's feet he showed it neither by look nor sign.

"Choo," she said briskly, "I'm going

to save this man if I can. I must have your help. Take him to the lower shed in the corral. I will go to him later. The horse is tied over in the hollow. Lead her off and picket her in the chaparral, so in the morning she can be seen from the stage road. He has no chance to escape if he leaves now, so we must hide him for a few days. Quickly, Choo, and—be careful." The servant came close to her so that the space between them, where the man lay flattened on the ground, was hidden from view, and then Choo raised a warning finger.

"Sh-h-h!—some one come!" A man was running up the path which led as a short cut to the mine. He was headed for the house, but stopped when he saw the girl and the servant. Then he spoke, his voice coming hoarsely and punctuated by his heavy breathing.

"Have yer—seen him—Miss Betty?"

"Why—why—Mr. Burro Bill, for a moment you—frightened me," and, as though amused by her own fear, she laughed lightly. "See him? Who?"

"That tenderfoot hoss-thief."

"The horse-thief?" incredulously. "Why, I—I thought he was going to be hanged?"

"Oh, he is all right, but—it's been adjourned—'til mornin'. Yer see—th' light'll be better then. I can't figure it out, Miss Betty, how he got his hands free, but he did, turned his hoss quicker'n a flash an' beat it to th' chaparral, hell-bent fer election. I stopped at Widow Hurley's boardin'-house below an' she told me she seen a stranger on foot a-headed this way just 'fore it grew dark."

"Coming this way?" cried the girl in surprise. "Well, I hope not."

"If that's th' case, Miss Betty, I'll go 'long back. Good evenin'." They watched him retrace his steps until out of sight. Then Choo helped the man to his feet and hurried him off around the side of the house, leaving the girl standing alone as one transfixed. Again Mrs. Marcum's voice called to her from within.

"Betty!—Bet-te-e-e! Do come to supper."

"All right, aunty, I am coming," and with quick, firm steps she entered the house.

It was close to midnight when she made her way noiselessly from the house to the lower shed in the corral. In the time which had intervened she had ample opportunity for reflection and the startling, rushing unreality of it all had left her visibly shaken. What would be the outcome? She knew that on account of the man's condition and exposure his state was critical. "Suppose he should die?" she found herself repeating with weird positiveness. She pressed both hands to her throbbing temples and walked dizzily toward the corral. She loathed the part she was playing and yet, even though her act returned to her again and again, appalling her with its glaring vividness, the remembrance of the last look he had given her, and his "au revoir," left her alternately with her senses swimming and chagrin at her hypocrisy. When she reached the corral and made her way to the alfalfa-shed, she paused within its cool enclosure. Her eyelids closed, and simultaneously with her shut-in vision came a dense, sinking sensation as if she were falling into a deep, black hole—again spreading over her the old mantle of lethargy. With an effort she roused herself and threw off the stifling, benumbed feeling, albeit her brain still reeled. Out from the darkness came his voice:

"Is it you?"

"Yes," she said, "it is I. How—do you feel?"

"I'm burning up!" She made her way to where he lay and her cool hand rested like a north wind on his pulsating forehead. Then through the hours which came and went until the first light appeared in the east to mark the rising sun she fought the battle of her life. Through all the night the vicious, venomous fever seared him with diabolical persistency, consuming him with an unquenchable fire and raging high until it seemed as though it must burst the human shell. In his rational moments he begged her to leave

him and then when delirium snuffed out his rare intervals of consciousness he babbled like a child, or swore in terrifying oaths. Through it all she labored with untiring energy and ceaseless vigilance. At times her slim fingers separated his hair in caressing movements and this quieted him immediately. Finally, just before daylight, the fever, baffled and repulsed at every turn, slowly receded and disappeared. Then it was he was able to understand while she briefly told him of her plans for his safety, and so she left him.

CHAPTER VII.

Six days had come and gone since that first night in the alfalfa-shed, six days of anxiety on her part lest he be discovered. For two days following the escape his disappearance had been a matter of wonder and dismay. The strongest argument advanced was that he had thrown himself in Sage Brush River which dashed through a hollow in the hills where the colonel's mare had been found tethered the next morning. Then another horse was stolen in a distant part of the county, which immediately took the vigilantes from the present scene to new fields of service, and the Breckenridge horse-thief was as effectively blotted from their minds as though he never existed.

Every night since the first night in the corral, when the world was hushed in sleep, he had come creeping stealthily to the living-room of the house for treatment. She had decided that this was the better way since it was manifestly safer for him to be abroad in the stillness of midnight than for her to journey forth and run foul of some wandering miscreant. She had declared that in the seclusion of the house after the others had retired there was not even a remote chance of his being detected. He had rebelled strongly at this plan, but she was firm and in the end he had capitulated.

Therefore each night she had sat at a window watching the rising moon bathe the silent desert with a celestial light—as she was doing now—waiting

for the figure of a man to come creeping, slowly creeping, around the house to the veranda, and thence, inch by inch, like a thief in the night, making his way along the veranda, through the open window to the living-room.

Ah—there he was now! With a heart beating almost to suffocation she watched him on his slow, zigzagging journey, seeing clearly every movement of his long, lithe body, as he hugged and wriggled along the ground, save when the moon was hidden behind the clouds which for an hour past had been scudding before a stiff breeze from the northwest. His slow, tortuous journey put her nerves on edge. She moved away from the window and waited—waited with shining eyes and with lips parted in a smile of which she was unaware, yet fully cognizant that all her senses were running riot because of something—she knew not what!

Her bosom rose and fell tumultuously and it seemed as if the man now worming his way along the veranda must hear the rapid thumping of her heart. No great light broke upon her to lay bare the poignant yearning of her whole healthy being—nor to disclose the innermost cravings of her soul; nothing told her that up to this man's coming her life had been one of husks, incomplete and bereft of music and of beauty, as is one who walks the world shorn of sight and hearing. The thought never occurred that perhaps the man of all men had come to her life, that never afterward would things be quite the same for her. She argued, that by reason of some inexplicable fiat he had, for the moment, cast an incomprehensible spell over her, a spell which would vanish as snow before a July sun when once he was gone from her life. This would be very soon but, somehow, this thought was not as comforting to her as it ought to be, and she wondered if—his head appeared above the window-sill and then his body. For an instant he stood on the veranda, silhouetted against a background of moonlight and brilliant, studded stars. Then he stepped lightly into the room and spoke in a whisper:

"Are you here?"

"Yes," she whispered in reply. "I watched you for a long time as you crawled from the corral to the house."

"I am sorry if I kept you waiting. Twice I thought I saw some one standing out there—first near the house and next under the awning, but every time I looked when the moon came through there was nobody to be seen." Her hand closed on his arm.

"Are you sure?" she asked in sudden alarm.

"Absolutely. It must have been my guilty conscience."

"Did you say guilty?" she questioned. "I don't think I understand!" They were seated by the small center-table now and spoke in whispers. The little room was alternately flooded with moonlight and wrapped in darkness as the clouds continually masked the face of the moon and then passed on in hurried flight.

"Yes, I am guilty," he said. There was distinct self-abasement in his tone. "Isn't it about as humiliating and cowardly a thing a man can do—to come—sneakingly—like this—at night? I deserve to be broken at the wheel!"

"You are unfair to yourself, my friend. This arrangement is much better for us than any other could be, as bad as it is. You could be in no safer place and, besides, it is all of my own choosing."

"So much the worse for me. I repeat, I am a coward to do it!"

"And I think your coming in this manner is anything but cowardly."

"Well, have it your own way. Perhaps it isn't cowardice. Call it just plain, criminal recklessness. The point is—that it is not my liberty but—your *name*—which is at stake."

"Why do you persist in magnifying my position?"

"I don't but—just see here! Of course, Choo knows I come here—he must—because when he brings my meals to me he always tells me who is going to be in the house at night and if any are to be out just where they are going. Suppose, for instance, Choo were to tell?"

"Who—Choo? Ah, no—you don't know him!"

"That may be but—anyway, suppose your father *were* to discover that I am here? What would he do?"

"Why—he—he—but how foolish to suppose any such impossible thing! He is in bed and sleeping soundly long ago, I'm sure."

"You have not answered the question. What *would* he do?"

"Why—why how—how should I know?"

"Answer my question, please."

"You are very arbitrary! Well, I presume, like all hot-headed Kentuckians, he would try—to—kill you!"

"Try! try! He *would* kill me and you too—wouldn't he?"

"Yes—I guess he would—if he could."

"And he could easy enough. I have nothing but Choo's knife to defend myself with and—I should deserve my death."

"You are making it very hard for me when you take this narrow view. I can't safely go to you, and since you have to be treated—you must come to me. It is a little out of the usual order of things—that is all. You absolutely need one more treatment. We are giving a sort of farewell supper-party to-morrow night to the neighbors and after they have gone you must come to me."

"All right—I'll do that—but come here again after that—never!"

"And now be a good boy and roll up your sleeve."

"Yes, doctor, which arm, please?" he asked banteringly.

"Don't be absurd. Please remember this is a professional call," she said coldly, in an attempt to be dignified.

"Pardon me, doctor. Have you the smelling-salts handy?"

"How silly! However, I shall jab in this needle with a vengeance—just to pay you back. There! Didn't that hurt?"

"Hurt? Ha, ha, ha!" Before he knew it his voice burst aloud into a laugh.

"Sh-h-h!"

"I beg a thousand pardons. What a fool I am to be so thoughtless! Hurt? Of course it didn't. Nothing you could do to me would hurt me now."

"Nothing?"

"Um—well, at first it rather hurt my pride when you did not care to know anything about myself, or even my name, but I have become used to—your little peculiarities, so if anything you do hurts me you will never know anything about it."

"And what has obliterated your sense of pain, pray tell?" His answer came with an intensity which left her shaken.

"What pain does the dog feel from the kick of his master?" he asked. "Don't you know you are the bravest, noblest woman who ever lived, that——" A soft hand closed suddenly over his lips.

"Hush!" she said. There was a pause and then she barely breathed: "Some one is moving about." Another pause. "Some one is coming down the stairs," in an agony of fear. The room was in total darkness. There was the noise as if a body had moved its position hurriedly and then—all was still!—*deadly still!* A hand felt along the wall outside and found the door-latch. The opening door creaked slightly and then closed with a faint, guarded sound. Another long pause in absolute silence, and then—a flaring match, suddenly struck, revealed Colonel Breckenridge with a revolver in hand standing motionless in the middle of the room. His daughter was in a chair apparently asleep. The match sputtered and went out. He scratched another and lighted the lamp on the table, looked about, then stepped lightly to where his daughter reclined, and gazed down upon her. Gently he shook her. She turned her head and asked sleepily:

"Yes—did you call?" and then, seeing her father beside her, rose to a sitting position. "Oh, I fell asleep here—I must hurry to bed. What's the matter, father?" she asked with real terror in her voice, pointing to his revolver. "You—you frighten me!" Colonel Breckenridge hastily shoved the weapon

partly out of sight in his pocket and replied in a soothing voice:

"There, there, Betty, don't let your foolish old dad scare you. It's kinder strange, but, you see, I was so restless to-night I couldn't sleep, and I could swear I heard somebody movin' around in this here room. I listened right sharp and then—then I heard a laugh—yes, I did, Betty—a man's laugh." Her face grew to an ashy whiteness, but her voice was steady as she exclaimed with a laugh:

"Why, father—a man's laugh and—in this room!" Again her laughter rippled forth. "Why, daddy dear, bless your old heart, you've been dreaming. Now, aren't—you—ashamed?" shaking a chiding finger at him, "even to *dream* that a man was in this room?" He drew one hand across his forehead in a perplexed manner and replied:

"Yes, surely I was dreaming—of course, I was dreaming, but," suddenly pointing to a closet across the room he added with vigor:

"There's a mighty big crowd of thieves and rascals in this God-forsaken country, and that closet"—he drew his revolver and crossed to it—"is plenty big enough to hold a sneaking cut-throat." As he stalked over the floor his daughter placed one hand to her mouth as though to stifle a scream and the other hand clutched the chair. With staring eyes she watched him grasp the door, yank it open and then—turn to her with a laugh.

"Well, Betty," he said sheepishly, "I'm a damn fool sure enough, ain't I?" Now a deep red stung her face and her breath came quickly. Thank God! she thought—he was not in the closet but—*where was he?*

"Don't you think I'm the biggest fool alive?" he repeated.

"A fool? I rather guess not. I just love to feel that I have the best protector in the world."

"Well, of all things," he cried in amazement, looking toward her.

"What—what is it now, dad?" she stammered, again agitated.

Her father had paused at the window

and was now looking intently at the woodwork.

He leaned over, rubbed his finger on the window-sill, then stepped back and again drew his revolver with a quick jerk.

"I tell you there's been a man in this room—he's here now!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sure!"

"How—how do you know?" she faltered.

"He came in this window!"

"In the window?"

"Yes. Right through here! There's alkali—from his boots—on the wood-work!"

"But—where is he?"

"Where is he?" repeated her father vaguely, and looked around the room. Then he pointed quickly to a couch: "Under there!" His daughter rose to her feet and once more she laughed.

"Under the couch? What has possessed you to-night, dad? There isn't any one under that couch, I'm sure."

"And I believe there is!" Going to him she placed a hand on each shoulder and gave him a playful shove.

"Dear old dad—please listen to me," she said, with a bright smile, albeit her face was totally devoid of color. "It's *such* a good joke on you. Now that alkali on the window-sill is from—my own shoes—I brushed them there only this afternoon. See what a false alarm all this is."

"Just the same, Betty," he persisted, with a shake of his head, "I ain't satisfied. I've got to look under that couch," and he started for it.

"Oh, no, dad," she cried, "I couldn't let you look. Don't you know that looking under furniture for a man is the sole privilege of every old maid? But you're so sure he is there that I'll look myself, just to prove to you he isn't." She dropped to her knees and, bending low, swept the space beneath the couch with a rapid glance, then sprang to her feet with a laugh which broke and died suddenly. "Of course—there is nobody—there," she half panted. "My goodness, daddy, I really believe your mind is wandering to—

night." For reply her father shoved his revolver back in his pocket and sank heavily into a chair beside the table. His head lowered. She was quick to note his attitude of dejection. In an instant she was at his side and then sat at his feet with her head resting on his knee.

"Ah, what is it, daddy—tell me? I'm still your little girl, dad."

"I know I'm just a foolish old man—seems like I don't know nothin' at all—but every time this old heart beats, it just beats a heap of love for you—only you, honey, ever since your mother died."

"Ah, yes, don't I know it? There, I didn't mean to make fun of you—forgive me, please."

"There ain't nothin' to forgive, honey. It's just the fear of a father for his only baby—for you'll always be a baby to me."

"And I always want to be your baby. You mustn't think, dad, that the years can make any difference. I know I have not been a good daughter to you—no, I haven't"—she insisted at his quick gesture of dissent—"I've let school and college teach me a lot of nonsense and draw me away from you. But I've come back to the old life—I've come back to stay, dad, and—I'll be a better girl."

"Why, what are you talkin' of, honey?"

"Oh, I know people think I am cold—that I haven't a heart—and perhaps sometimes even you have wondered if I had any affection for you. Ah, love you"—throwing her arms about his neck—"the best and kindest dad who ever lived? Why, love you? I guess I do." His arms folded about her and he said huskily:

"I knew it—I knew it."

"Of course you did," she replied, rising to her feet. "Come now—back to bed and don't worry any more. I'll go, too, in a little while. I'm not sleepy now. Just think—in a short time we will all be back where it is good to live—back where those colts are growing fat in the blue grass—back where our own kind are waiting for us." He

stood upon his feet as one who has suddenly had the weight of years lifted from his shoulders.

"Betty, when I look at you," he said slowly, "why, I'm the proudest man alive. I get so happy I—I get afraid!" She walked to the door with her arm linked in his.

"I am glad you are happy, dad," she said simply, "that makes me happy, too." He opened the door, and paused while he turned to survey her, his face expressing a wealth of affection. To him the pallor of her cheek and the hunted look in her eyes meant nothing. His little girl had come back to him. He kissed her and said "Good night" with a note of new tenderness in his voice.

CHAPTER VIII.

The steady footfalls of her father as he made his way up-stairs found an echo in the rhythmic thump! thump! thump! of the beating of her heart. Now that the suffocating tension had relaxed, her brain reeled and she convulsively grasped the door-knob to keep from falling. Her fingers touched the key in the door and, mechanically, she turned it in the lock. Rapidly her mind cleared and yet her knees were so weak she was forced to lean against the door for support. For a moment she stood thus and then by a great effort once more took a better hold of her faculties. She bent slightly toward the couch and whispered:

"It's all right—don't make any noise!"

Slowly, as a snail moves, he dragged himself from beneath the couch, stopping every few inches to look up at her and then continuing when she motioned him to do so. At last he was on his feet. There was no fear in his expression, just loathing, utter loathing.

"A fine kind of a man I am!" he breathed in disgust—"to sneak under that couch and hide there like a rat in a hole!"

"I don't see how you could very well do anything else."

"Anything else?" he exclaimed. "My God! I should have done everything

else. There was the window wide open—why I didn't go that way I don't know. It was a case of blue funk—I haven't the sand of a——"

"Hush!" she said, "you mustn't talk like that about yourself, I don't believe it and—it isn't true. Well, it was a narrow escape, but—it is all over now." Reaching forward she turned down the lamp a little and then picked it up. "I'll hold the lamp so you can see your way better. It's very dark when the moon is hidden."

"Before I go," he said, "I want you to know how thoroughly mean and despicable I feel. You believe me, don't you—you believe that I feel my thoughtlessness, my selfishness, more than I can possibly express?"

"You mustn't take it that way. Circumstances forced us to grasp a situation which nearly—proved dangerous, that's all."

"Ah, no, it isn't that. Never to my dying day shall I forget your courage—your kindness—everything—and you did it all for me." They were standing near the window now and, for the first time, before his luminous gaze her own eyes wavered and fell.

"I did it for you," she said, "as I would for any one—as I should expect any one to do for me. If I have succeeded in helping you to—start anew from your dead self—I shall feel—amply repaid."

"Of that you may be sure."

"Then I am glad." He put one leg out of the window, turned to her and said:

"Again—au revoir!" She held the lamp up a little, but her gaze was averted.

"Good night," she said. "Look out you don't stumble. Can you see——" Then her voice was buried in the sharp report of a revolver-shot which came from the ground outside and, simultaneously with the shot, the light in her hand was snuffed out and the chimney was shattered into a thousand pieces! Again they were in total darkness. He was the first to recover from the shock.

"Are you hurt?" he asked in an agonized whisper and then, receiving

no reply, "for God's sake where are you? Speak!"

"No—I'm not hit but, I'm—I'm horribly frightened!" Groping in the dark, he found her quite close to him.

"Give me your hand—here—come away from that window! The moon will be through in a second," and as he spoke it began to grow lighter.

"Somebody must have seen you from outside and fired," she said. "Can you see any one?"

"I can't tell yet," and then, involuntarily clutching her and drawing her close, he added: "Yes, there he is—look!—under the awning!"

"Yes, yes—I see him! It looks like one of the miners. Oh, what shall we do!"

"Do! Do? There is nothing for me to do except—to go to him." He loosened the hands which now clung to him and pushed her gently away.

"But you can't do that," she protested wildly—"you are unarmed!—you will be—murdered!" and the word came with a gasp.

"And what does my life matter now?" he said evenly. "Ah, the moon is going behind a cloud again."

"Can't you wait?" she pleaded. "He may go."

"And what good will that do? Hasn't he seen a strange man climbing from this window? He'll rouse the camp. I can't let him get away. No—it is his life or mine!"

"But you will have no chance!"

"I'll take a chance with this knife of Choo's." Her hands reached out and gripped his sleeve.

"Don't go—please wait." Her voice came like a sob. "How—how will I know—if you—have gotten—away?" He shook her off rather roughly.

"If he kills me—it is of no consequence and, if I kill him—I will—whistle! It's pitch-dark now. Good-by—listen for—my whistle!" and he was gone.

She leaned out of the window to see, but nothing came to her vision out of the night's blackness. She strained her ears, but outdoors the stillness of the grave prevailed. What was it he said—

listen for his whistle? Oh, that he might get away—uninjured—safe!—and then——

Bang! bang! bang!—came a pounding on the door of the room.

"Betty!—Betty! Open the door!" It was her father's voice!

"Yes, dad, yes," she answered aloud, "I'm—I'm coming—in a moment, dad." Again he rattled the door as if impatient of delay, and with her senses in a whirl she stumbled blindly across the floor of the darkened room. After a seemingly interminable delay she managed to unlock and open the door. Her father stood before, lamp in hand, and smiling pleasantly.

"It's nothing to be scared about, honey. Did the shooting frighten you?" he asked.

"Y-y-y—yes—I—I—was quite frightened. What—what was it?"

"Oh, I guess it wasn't nothing but a drunken miner giving us a good-night salute on his way to the boarding-house." He carried the lamp to the table.

"Oh—oh, was that it?"

"Yes, that's all. What did you think it could be, Betty?" He hesitated and paused in surprise. "Why, Betty!—where's the lamp?" She turned from the window with a start while one hand pressed her throbbing bosom.

"The lamp?—yes, of course, the lamp. Oh, when the shot was fired I jumped out of the chair, you see, dad, it was in the dark and I—I didn't know where I was. Ha, ha—wasn't that funny, dad? And then I lifted the lamp but I was so nervous I dropped it, that is, I dropped the chimney."

"There, there, honey," he said, "don't keep looking and listening so out the window. That rascal has gone long ago. Made you so that you can't sleep, didn't it? That's why I came down—thought you'd be right scared. Never mind the old lamp. Guess I'll pick up the pieces of glass, though." He started for the window but she headed him off.

"No, no—please, please don't bother, dad," she begged.

"But I don't want to cut my feet," he expostulated. "But—it's just as you

say, Betty," he concluded, as he sat down wearily with his back to the window. She laughed and patted his shoulder, but she was turned almost squarely around to the window when she spoke again:

"Don't—don't you want to go to bed?"

"Yes, in a minute or two. I ain't very sleepy now, either. Do you know, Betty, after I went up-stairs," he chuckled, "and got to thinking of what an old fool I was to expect I was going to find a man under that couch, I remembered the story of the old maid who used to go to her room every night and kneel by her window. Ever hear it, Betty?" No answer. He looked around to see her staring toward the window. "I say, Betty, did you ever hear the story?"

"No—I—I don't remember."

"Well, this old maid wanted to get married right bad. So she prayed to the good Lord to send her a man, and this night she knelt down at the window"—here he arose and pointed to the open window. In his desire to tell the story her gasp of terror and her hand outstretched to stay him escaped his notice. "Just like that window up yonder," he added, "so she flops down on her knees and says: 'Dear Lord, won't you please send me a man?' Just then a big owl out in the woods says: 'Whoo!—whoo!'—and the old maid jumps up and cries: 'Oh, anybody, Lord, anybody, as long as it's a man!'" As her father finished, a faint, lingering whistle came to her ears through the open window. She threw both hands to her head and laughed shrilly, then her voice came hysterically in dry sobs and, staggering forward helplessly, she fell face downward on the couch. Her father stood up with a grin, well pleased to think his story could produce such a paroxysm of joy in his usually phlegmatic daughter.

"I say, Betty," he asked, breaking into a hearty laugh, "ain't that story a *good* one?"

An hour later any one watching from the house would have seen Choo drag

the body of a man from under the awning and load it into a wheelbarrow, then trundle the wheelbarrow down the rock-strewn path to the desert, and then on and on over the desert until it seemed as if he were bent on meeting the rising sun. Finally he stopped and began to dig. The work was hard yet he toiled without cessation until the hole was deep. When he had finished he leaned over and examined the body for a moment.

"He was stabbed deep enough to kill ten men," he muttered, and then—tumbled the limp body to its last resting-place.

The morning sun was showing on the mountain-peaks when Choo retraced the way he had come, carefully blotting out the track of the barrow with his shoes as he did so. Then for five minutes he was busy with a brush and pail of water under the awning. Then he calmly went to bed. When the world awoke there were no dark-red, ominous stains on the ground in front of the house. Down at the mine one of the day shift was missing when it came time to go in the shaft. At noon another man was hired in his place.

CHAPTER IX.

From within the dining-room came the sound of hilarity, interspersed with the tinkle of glasses and rattle of plates. Colonel Breckenridge entered the living-room from the dining-room and headed directly for the sideboard. He lost no time in grasping the well-filled decanter and pouring himself a generous drink.

"Ah-h-h!" he sighed, as he smacked his lips in gratification, "champagne for a frivolous beverage, but for life-giving food give me—whisky." He turned to see his daughter standing in the doorway of the dining-room.

"Hello, Betty," he said genially, "everything going all right in there?"

"Yes," she answered, with a smile. "They seem to be having a perfectly lovely time. I imagine a farewell supper-party is something new for this country. I think they are sorry to have

us return East." Here another shout of laughter arose within the dining-room.

"They're a good deal like children," said Colonel Breckenridge—"so frank and natural. Take that Mrs. Hurley for instance, the boarding-mistress over at the mine. She is very witty and jolly."

"Isn't she, though?" agreed his daughter. "And Mesquite Mame who keeps the Mountain Lion Hotel on the stage road at the summit—what a splendid, genuine girl she is!"

"Yes," said her father, "there is a great deal to that girl. Isn't it funny," he continued musingly, "what a dog-like, speechless infatuation that little man, Burro Bill, has for her?"

"I noticed that. How he does glare at Snapshot whenever Snapshot speaks to her or helps her to anything at the table."

"Well, I hope they don't clash," said the colonel seriously. "Louis says Burro Bill is known as quite a bad man on the ranch where he works as foreman."

"In what way is he a bad man?" she asked.

"Oh, I presume, as a gun-fighter."

"Well, I don't expect to see any of that here this evening," she said. "Come, dad, you better return to your guests. Auntie may be nervous with them in there alone."

"I guess you're right, Betty," he answered, and made haste to rejoin them. For a moment she stood in thought, then walking to the window, stood there and looked out. "I wonder what he is doing," she said to herself. "He must be quite lonely. And last night"—even now a feeling of acute terror seized upon her at the bare recollection of the night's long, agonizing suspense. What a man he was, she thought, valuing his own life as little as one possibly could, in the darkness of night groping over the ground in search of a man who was simply waiting to shoot him down. Ah, that was a real man for you!—no matter what he had been—the present showed enough. He was destined to do a part in the world's

work which would count in the final summing-up of events worth while. Of this she was sure. Mrs. Hurley's rollicking Irish brogue suddenly shattered her reverie. She turned to see her father and Mrs. Hurley entering the room.

"Oh, man dear, 'twas a foine feed ye giv' us," exclaimed Mrs. Hurley, with a deep breath of heartfelt satisfaction. "It made me think av th' Sunday dinners we had in th' ould place t' home in Kerry. It tasted near as good as pig's head an' cabbage."

"I am glad you liked the supper, madam," said the colonel.

"Liked it? An' th' champagne. Ow, wow! By gorry, th' divil himself is in that electric jooce. Whee! Thim bubbles do be playin' tag inside av me. I feel like jiggin' an' flappin' me wings to wanst. I'm here an' I'm there, um—diddy—I—dum—I'm all over, like Mrs. McGuinness said whin th' mine boss wint t' her shanty an' towld her her man Mike was jist *after* sittin' on a blashtin' charge *before* it wint off. Sez he: 'Some av poor Mike is in th' shaft, some av him is on th' thrail be-yant an' some av him is sthll borin' holes in th' fleecy clouds above.' 'God bless us,' sez Mrs. McGuinness, 'that's Mike, yis 'tis Mike—*all over!*' D'ye moind that?"—emphasizing her question by hitting the colonel a resounding slap between the shoulder-blades with one broad, red hand. "Oh, dear, oh, dear," she squealed happily, "th' champagne has filled me wid th' gintle sphirit av repartay!"

By this time the other guests had left the supper-table and entered. The colonel turned to them with genuine regret in his voice.

"I'm very sorry to say," he said, "that I must leave you all for the rest of the evening. I hope you'll be good enough to excuse me. Mr. Taylor has asked me to ride to the depot for an express package."

"We'll miss you, colonel," said Snapshot Skinner grandly, leaning back on his heels, "but we'll take home a heap to remember you by," and he tenderly patted his own stomach. Colonel

Breckenridge shook hands cordially with all and then, after turning with a gallant bow at the door, left the room.

Burro Bill sidled awkwardly up to Snapshot Skinner and from his vantage-point of five-foot-three gazed up at Snapshot's comfortable-looking countenance, towering some twelve inches above him.

"Say, Snapshot," said the little man, "after yer has had grub like that t' regale yer copper linin' it makes yer want t' go up 'gainst th' outfit cook-wagon with yer eyes blindfolded."

"Hah!" ejaculated Snapshot, "it certainly slid into me slicker'n grease. Sufferin' Rebecca—but my insides has had a eddication *this* evenin'."

"Same here," agreed the other. "I never had nothin' like it before—only oncet."

"Whar wuz that, Bill?" inquired Snapshot. The rest of the party had gathered at the other end of the room, leaving Snapshot and Burro Bill to exchange their confidences undisturbed.

"Oh, that wuz way, way East—New Orleans—hotel," announced Burro Bill, briefly, with his eyes on the ceiling and his manner one of deep reflection. "Reg'lar royal palace, that hotel. Carpet a foot thick, oil-paintin's on the walls, water-pipes in th' room all solid silver an'—"

"Here, hold on, hold on!" ordered Snapshot incredulously. "Did you say—*solid* silver?"

"Yes—solid silver," answered Burro Bill, bristling like a game-cock.

"Huh!" snorted Snapshot. "How did th' water go through 'em if they wuz solid silver?" Burro Bill cleared his throat, hesitated and then said triumphantly:

"Easy enough, pard, easy enough. How in hell does electricity go through solid wire?" Paying no attention to Snapshot's open-mouthed wonder, he continued easily:

"Yes, as I wuz sayin', they must 'a' give me th' bridal chamber. Swimmin'-hole right off my room had a ceilin' an' floor all 'n solid ivory, an' mebbe that swimmin'-place didn't look invitin'! Made me wish 'twas Saturday night.

Say thar warn't no flies on th' booze in that room thar," smacking his lips in fond remembrance. "Oh, champagne—champagne, come see me again!"

"Do you like champagne better'n red-eye straight?" asked Snapshot.

"Do I—do I?" repeated Burro Bill emphatically. "Well, I should snicker. Whisky is liquid dynamite what busts yer self-control—makes yer want t' break everythin'—but that champagne—oh, rock me to sleep, mother! I kin close m' eyes an' see pink an' yaller shootin' stars, I kin close m' ears an' hear birds a-singin' an' golden harps a-plunkin', I kin——" Reaching down, Snapshot gave him a rough shake and did not desist until he saw one hand feeling at his hip. Then he let go and cried mockingly:

"Ha, ha—that ain't no champagne! That's pizen from Cupid's arser, that's slushy, spoony mush! You're in *love*!" His laugh was maddening. Burro Bill took a step toward his tantalizer and doubled up his fists, but here Miss Breckenridge's voice caused a pause in the impending hostilities.

"We have decided that we should like to play a game," she said. "Would you care to join us, gentlemen?"

"A game?" asked Snapshot. "Sure! I'll take a couple of stacks."

"Me, too, bud," added Burro Bill. "Gimme a dollar's wuth—I only want t' play 'til sunrise." And he laughed.

"Oh, no," explained Taylor, "not the great American game, boys. Miss Breckenridge means the kind of game we played when we were children." This announcement brought a decided objection from Mrs. Hurley.

"Oh, no—not for me," said she, wagging her head decidedly, "I'll play no hop-scotch."

"Not that kind," said Miss Breckenridge, smiling in spite of herself. "I mean like—Copenhagen or post-office. Wouldn't it be fun?"

"Oh, me—oh, my—a kissin' game, is it?" asked Mrs. Hurley with a twinkle in her eye.

"Copenhagen?" inquired Snapshot and Burro Bill together.

"Yes, we'll show you," said Miss Breckenridge. "Will some one please get a rope?"

"A rope?" asked Burro Bill with increasing wonder. "Why, whose been doin' anythin' aroun' here t' git strung up?" Snapshot jabbed a reproving elbow into his side and growled:

"Wake up—wake up! Go git yer lariat, an' hurry up!" When Burro Bill had left obediently on his errand, Mesquite Mame said:

"Listen to me, good folks! Don't git Bill mad in this thing what yer about t' pull off, 'cause if he gits t' turnin' handsprings—a balloon's th' only safe place fer us."

"Now don't you worry any, Mesquite," drawled Snapshot; "that midget o' yours ain't a-goin' t' harm any of us full-grown men."

"I know yer only kiddin', Snapshot," said Mesquite, "when yer talk like that, 'cause you know Bill's game. He plays his hand right through no matter if he's bluffin' or sittin' pat." Here Burro Bill entered with his lariat, preventing further discussion. Under Miss Breckenridge's direction the two ends of the lariat were joined together and all present took hold of the rope, forming a circle.

"We're all ready to begin," said Mrs. Marcum, "but who's going to be it?"

"It," demanded both Burro Bill and Snapshot in surprise.

"Some one must stand inside the ring," explained Taylor, "and try to hit the hand of any one holding the rope. If the person standing in the center slaps anybody's hand, the one whose hand is hit must pay the forfeit, that is, kiss the one in the center. Now who'll be it—just to start the game going?"

"Me, I'm the one to be it," Snapshot was quick to say, before any one else could offer his services. "Yes, I'll be it, seein' as how everybody else refuses." Burro Bill raised a protesting hand and quickly assumed a belligerent attitude.

"Hold on!" he cried. "I ain't very quick to get wise t' these Eastern games, but"—here he paused with a meaning look at Snapshot—"I kin see with one eye when a man is tryin' to

deal from th' bottom of th' deck, an' fer this reason I vetoes you, Snapshot. An' ag'in, this 'pears like a game whar yer hands must step lively, an' mebbe—mebbe Mesquite thar might find her lily-white hands stuck tight t' th' lariat when you make a pass at her'n. I might also add, in passin' this subject, that I ain't interested in *no* love-affairs—'ceptin' my own!"

"Shure, what talk hov you, man!" Mrs. Hurley hastily protested. "My, my, *my*—but yer're a jilous little son-of-a-gun! Phat th' divil is wan kiss, shure, or—or tin av thim aither? There may be har-rm in a contin'ous perform-ance, but heh, by gorry, 'tis a long way from a peck av a kiss t' th' altar. Sthand back! I'll be it!" This seemed to be an easy solution of a situation which was fast reaching a stage where diplomatic relations were of no avail, and all entered with zest into the game under the new arrangement. Mrs. Hurley made her rounds within the circle with many loud "ah, hahs" and "ho, hohs," together with: "Oh, my, ye slip'rey divil!"—"Snapshot, ye hov a hand like th' fut av a jackass an'—it's as lively!" As Mrs. Hurley passed on Snapshot spoke to Betty:

"A lariat is a most necessary article, Miss Betty," he vouchsafed—"use it fer a hangin' one day an' a kissin'-bee th' next." She let go of the rope at once and stepped back.

"Has—has this one—do you mean," she faltered, "that this one is the one that—that?"

"Th' very same," broke in Snapshot, "that wuz 'round th' neck o' that city feller what swiped yer father's mare an' got away." She turned her back to the rope with an expression of loathing on her face. Taylor hastened to her side.

"What's the matter? Don't you like our game, Betty?" he asked.

"I—I was wondering if something else would not be more fun. Does any one care if we change?" This suggestion was agreeable to all and they took seats about the room expectantly.

"I think post-office is a good game," said Mrs. Marcum, "at least it was so considered when I was a girl."

"Well," said Burro Bill, in a devil-may-care manner, "what's th' limit in post-office?"

"Oh, I remember *that* game," cried Mesquite Mame joyfully. "Th' one who is it has t' go out 'n th' hall an' shut th' door tight. It's no fair to peek. Then th' one who's it out'n th' hall opens th' door an' says: 'Letter'n th' post-office fer—Burro Bill!' Then when Burro-Bill comes t' git his letter, he gits a——"

"Huh!" snorted Burro Bill incredulously. "What are yer givin' me? Nobody ever writes t' me!"

"Oh, not a *real* letter!" she explained. "Th' letter's a kiss—yer dum fool!" The bright light of understanding shed its rays of intelligence on the slow-thinking Burro Bill.

"Oh, yes—I—I—see," he said with a broad grin. "All right—you go ahead an' be it, Mesquite! Ahem! Thar ought t' be 'bout a dozen letters'n th' post-office fer me now!"

"Not much!" declared Snapshot. "We'll have th' gals draw lots fer this post-office appointment. It may make a diff'rence t' *some* as t' who's a-goin' t' be th' postmistress." He produced four matches and, after breaking a piece off three of them, he held them out and said:

"Th' one who's lucky 'nough t' pull th' shortest match is it." Mrs. Marcum, Mrs. Hurley, Mesquite and Betty each drew in turn from Snapshot's hand and then, after comparing them, Mesquite cried gleefully:

"Hooray!—I'm it!"

"Very well," said Miss Brécken-ridge, "you go out in the hall and we'll sit around and wait for you to open the door and tell us who has a letter. And, Mesquite," she admonished her with a warning finger, "mind you give them all the letters which are coming to them!"

"Will I!" she answered. "Just you leave it to me." Mesquite gave a meaning look to Snapshot, who returned her look with a smile and then nodded his head toward Burro Bill, who was just now a picture of embarrassment as he sat with his eyes riveted on the ceiling

and trying his hardest to appear unconcerned. So—after many days—he was “a-goin’ t’ git his’n,” he thought. At last he was to come into his own! For many long months he had clung to this tantalizing Mesquite, like a mountain-lion to the trail of a wounded sheep, and now his perseverance was to be rewarded, his faithfulness was to be crowned by the queen herself. Already the gates of paradise had opened for him and through their shining portals he could behold that glistening fountain where played the stream of perpetual youth, the nectar of the gods. He moistened his lips expectantly and suddenly straightened in his chair as Mesquite’s clear voice sang out:

“Well, are you all ready?”

“Yes, all ready,” they chorused in reply, and then she opened the door. Burro Bill grew pale with suppressed emotion. It was a tough thing, this tipping off your hand to everybody and his natural modesty rebelled at the raw show-down. However—here he set his teeth—he was going through with it and he didn’t give a da—ah!—here came the summons! Mesquite had opened the door and was closely scrutinizing the little company as though searching for some one. This was more than Burro Bill could stand. He swallowed nervously and looked away. Then Mesquite spoke, hesitating carefully between each word:

“A—let—ter—in—the—post—of—fice—fer——” she paused. Burro Bill arose to his feet. It was a mighty fine thing to be the chosen one out of many hundred men on the range, all bigger men than he was, he thought, and then—a thunderbolt descended from the cloudless heavens and smote him on his unsuspecting head!

“A—let—ter—fer—*Snapshot Skinner!*” she concluded.

CHAPTER X.

Burro Bill dropped back heavily in his chair. A million shooting stars seemed to crash against his brain and then off into space. His chest heaved and out of the blood-red mist which en-

compassed his blurred vision he saw the huge, looming form of Snapshot Skinner, who now stood up and cleared his throat with a resonant “ahem!” He paid no attention to the pop-eyed, heavy-breathing man now petrified in a chair beside him, but proceeded to stroke his mustache, elevate his shoulders and then stalk majestically to the door leading into the hall. Here he turned with a nonchalant manner and addressed the paralyzed Burro Bill:

“William—William!” he repeated with an airy, grandiloquent gesture, “for th’ next few minutes I shall be very, very busy. And William, I expect you t’ see I am not disturbed. William—remember!” and the hall door closed behind him. The hush—which followed Snapshot’s exit was broken by Burro Bill springing to his feet and striding to the door back of which, he was sure, was Mesquite in the arms of—bending over, he listened at the key-hole. What he heard must have convinced him, for he straightened quickly and yanked out his gun as he did so.

Here was indeed a most serious turn to the affair and, fearing the outcome, Taylor grasped the irate man. Mrs. Hurley came forward also and took hold of him as he tried to point his revolver at the hall door. In the struggle the revolver went off in the air. Immediately the door flew open and out came Mesquite and Snapshot. She saw Burro Bill standing in the middle of the room, revolver in hand, and demanded:

“Air *you* th’ galoot what’s tryin’ t’ shoot up th’ place?”

“Yes—I’m th’ one,” Burro Bill replied fiercely, between his set teeth, “I’m th’ one—understand?—*me!*”

“What fer?” she demanded, and grabbed hold of his revolver. “Leggo that gun!” she added, and he did so.

“What fer?” he repeated in a rage. “You know what fer! I ain’t a-goin’ t’ stand round a-suckin’ m’ thumb an’ hev *that* man”—with a glare of deadly hate at Snapshot—“a-gittin’ of a strangle-holt on you, an’ don’t you fergit it neither. An’ what’s more, if yer want t’ know it, I’m sore—I’m sore!”

"Why, you dippy little, banty rooster, you," retorted Mesquite, "Snapshot git a strangle-holt on me? Rats! Now I know why they nicknamed you Burro Bill—'cause yer're a jackass, that's why. You're sore? *You?* I should say you wuz! Yer're causin' more trouble here'n a runnin' sore—yer sawed-off runt! I'm th' one t' be sore! Understand? Me!" Poor Burro Bill! Under her rapid-fire denunciation his unbridled rage had quickly receded and now when she finished he felt utterly crushed. "A sawed-off runt," she had called him and any reference to his stunted growth always cut him to the quick. His bitter despair had its effect on Mesquite and straightway she ceased her rough teasing.

"Say, Bill," she asked, stepping nearer and speaking in a tone which again opened to Burro Bill's eyes visions of happiness sublime, "hev yer got a gnawin' desire t' stake out a life claim'n me?" There was no mistaking her meaning. All the pent-up desire of his being came forth in one spasm as he strangled and blurted:

"Yeh—yeh—yes!"

Stepping back, Mesquite plunged a hand into her pocket and Burro Bill, immediately anticipating a procedure compatible only with such a movement, at once reached for his own gun, but Mesquite—only drew out her handkerchief.

"Well, then," she sniveled, meanwhile blowing her nose vigorously, "why the devil"—blow—"didn't you say"—blow—"so before?" Then without waiting for him to explain his long delay in asking this momentous question, she pulled him toward her and kissed him, which act, it is needless to relate, was immediately repeated with zest by the wildly happy Burro Bill.

"An' now I want to state," said Mesquite, "that me and Snapshot wuz only playin' a little joke on yer—just to git yer mad."

"Well, yer got me mad all right," said Burro Bill, as he turned to accept Snapshot's hand and gave it a hearty shake.

In the midst of the warm congratula-

tions which all made haste to bestow upon them, Miss Breckenridge pressed Mesquite's hand and said:

"I'm so glad, Mesquite. I hope you will be very, very happy."

"I thank yer, mam," she replied and then, with a deep sigh, "gee! when I want anythin'—I want it powerful bad."

"I have no doubt that is true," said the other, "and, after all, I guess that is the way with all of us when—once our minds are made up."

Meanwhile Snapshot and Taylor had drawn to one side and were conversing in low tones.

"You don't really suppose there was any one there, do you?" remarked Taylor.

"Don't ask me," answered Snapshot, "'cause I don't know. I'm only tellin' yer what Mrs. Hurley told me. You know the Irish is allus great fer seein' spooks an' such things an' I s'pose widows see more'n those what's hitched double, but she says she saw him last night near th' gate of Breckenridge's corral. She warn't very near, but 'twas moonlight an' she saw him stoop over an' reach to th' ground as though he war a-pickin' up somethin'. She got scared an' let out a yell. Just then a cloud went 'cross th' moon an' 'twas all off."

"I believe I'll go around there later this evening," said Taylor, "and see for myself."

"Well, if you do," cautioned Snapshot, "be sure an' take your gun 'long. There may be somethin' in it an' it ain't a-goin' to do no harm to be prepared." Mrs. Hurley here announced her departure to Miss Breckenridge.

"I'm sorry to say, miss, that I've got to leave you—something th' divil never did to old Snapshot."

"But it is early yet," said Miss Breckenridge. "Must you go?"

"Faith an' I must. I hov t' feed forty miners at six'n th' mornin' an' ivry divil's wan av thim has th' capacity av a boa-con-sthriect-tor! By gorry, I had a foine toime."

"You must come again. We shall not go for several days," said Mrs.

Marcum. With a low curtsy to each Mrs. Hurley took her leave, and she was followed by Snapshot, Mesquite and Burro Bill, after each had shaken hands with Mrs. Marcum and Betty.

"I guess I'll follow along with the rest," said Taylor. "I have quite a little writing to do at the office. If I am through about the time your father ought to return I'll drop around then and see him. Good night, Mrs. Marcum. Good night, Betty."

"Good night, Louis," said Betty. As Taylor left Choo entered from the dining-room and began to arrange the table and chairs which had been moved to one side before the games of the evening began. Mrs. Marcum made no attempt to hide a wide yawn.

"If you will excuse me, Betty," she said, "I think I'll go to bed. I can hardly keep my eyes open. You had better leave the door unlocked for your father when he returns."

"All right, aunty," she answered, "good night." For some moments after Mrs. Marcum had left she sat quietly by the table, her hands clasped in her lap with a far-away look in her eyes, then she turned quickly when she heard a slight noise behind her, to see Choo smoothing the Navajo blanket on the couch.

"That will be all, Choo, thank you," she said. The servant started for the dining-room but paused for an instant in the doorway and eyed her keenly. She had again assumed her former position, looking off with eyes that saw not. Then he quietly closed the dining-room door and left her alone. How long she sat she had no idea, but the sound of the front door opening and softly closing caused her to rise to her feet, wheel and face—the man!

"You are thoroughly reckless," she said coldly. "Why will you be so thoughtless as to endanger yourself further?"

"But it was you who compelled me to come here to-night," he protested. "And I made up my mind I wouldn't sneak in by the window again."

"Yes, I understand that," she replied, "but I did not expect you to come so

early that you would pass the guests going home. Coming at this hour is most foolhardy."

"They did not see me—nobody will see me—so why this needless alarm?"

"Father has gone to the depot," she said, "and will not return for some time yet. I simply wished to be cautious. Last night's lesson was quite enough for me."

"Last night!" he echoed. She had again seated herself. He walked slowly toward her and stood beside her at the other side of the table. "Last night!" he said again. "Was there ever such a night as last night?" He bent toward her and barely breathed the words.

"Tell me—that man—under the awning—his body—where is it?" In spite of herself she shuddered before she answered:

"That man who shot at you was one of the miners, a stranger here. His body—is buried—out there—in the desert."

"Buried? By whom? Who found it?"

"I sent Choo to look for it—I knew you must have—killed him—because when father came back after you left by the window, I could hear that man and you panting and struggling out-doors—and his groans!—oh!—it was awful!" For a moment she placed her hand over her eyes and then continued: "Not that I blame you in the least. It was, as you said—your life or his, and though it may seem selfish, you were bound to consider my position. So, while the taking of human life is a terrible thing, it seems as if this were absolutely unavoidable. The man is dead and buried; as the diplomats say: 'The incident is closed.'" She turned to him with a wan ghost of a smile.

"I can no longer endure this," he said with increasing passion, "I will not."

"One might think you had been partially burned at the stake, or suffered some other form of excruciating torture. What have you ever endured that is worthy of the word?" she asked

with spirit. "I should imagine your life has been a very easy one."

"What you say is quite true and please try to remember," he gently insisted, "that I am considering you—not myself. It is your position I cannot endure—my own?—pah!"—he snapped his fingers. "Oh, I tell you that every waking moment has been torn with anxiety for you, because in a moment of sympathy you allowed a mad impulse to sway you. Since then I have been selfish enough to let you nearly sacrifice that which you should hold best and dearest." There was no mistaking his ardor, or the gratitude in his glance. Her gaze fell when she answered.

"I—I—am—glad—to have been of assistance. I regret—that you do not care to submit further to my professional skill."

"No, I will submit no longer," he declared positively. "I have thought it all out. My mind is made up—irrevocably. Besides, there is much to say—much that you should know about myself. You never would let me tell you anything. In fairness to me, you should listen now; in fact, you must listen."

"Must?" she asked, lifting her head quickly. For a moment they measured each other, eye to eye, and his glance was the one which hardened.

"Yes, I said must," he repeated calmly. "My name is—Harry Ogden." She bowed to him slightly and her voice affected a light tone when she spoke:

"How do you do, Mr. Ogden, and now, since you have been good enough to confide your name to me, do you mind my saying that this is as far as I ever go with my patients? In fact, I never allow the personal equation to be considered in my consultations. It is unethical. Why are you in such haste to speak? Has your past life been so terribly interesting? Do you imagine I care to know? Why is it necessary at all?"

"No—of course you are quite right. It is not necessary that you should know—although—it is only decent of me to inform you of my departure—I am leaving to-night."

CHAPTER XI.

In spite of her evident effort at self-control she gave a perceptible start, yet her voice was disinterested when she asked politely:

"Leaving—to-night?"

"Yes, to-night," he said. "The vigilantes have ceased to look for me. Therefore I have no further excuse for remaining." She motioned him to sit opposite and she smiled slightly when she insisted:

"But you are my patient—I have not yet discharged you as cured."

"Cured or not, the patient absolutely refuses to further jeopardize the reputation and honor of his physician." He spoke with conviction.

"Your physician appreciates your consideration and yet—I am I not the best judge as to where my conduct will lead me?" she asked.

"It would hardly seem so. At any rate," shrugging his shoulders, "you must acknowledge the futility of all this. Moreover, I have ceased to desire that insidious, diabolical poison. The appetite for morphin has left me. I can refuse it now—I hope I shall never want it again. Your treatment has been quite thorough."

"Yes, you are cured," she said. "You were cured several days ago."

"Cured!" he exclaimed, gazing at her dazedly. "What do you mean? I do not understand!"

"I have been fooling you," she said again, smiling to him across the table, "I have not administered morphia to you but once—that was the night you escaped and came back."

"Did you say once—only once?" he repeated unbelievably. "You are jesting! Why, you have given it to me every night since then—here!"

"That is your mistake. You believed it was morphin. What I gave you has both answered my purpose and appeased your desire for it equally well, and yet—your mistake shows me you are normal again. For six days you have had"—here she paused and from her manner he knew she was speaking the whole truth—"for six days you

have had nothing—but pure—spring-water!"

"You mean—you mean to say," he faltered, "that the treatment—during the past week—has been a—delusion? That the wild, maddening, uncontrollable hunger has vanished—that the fiendish hunger which consumed me on that train riding through the desert has vanished—gone forever?"

"Yes. You need fear morphin never again." He placed his arms on the table and his head sank upon them. For an instant he shook and a dry sob escaped him. He raised a haggard face.

"Please forgive my weakness," he begged. "It is unmanly, I know, but the full realization of what you have told me has so changed my future existence that it has overcome and unnerved me. It is a trite saying to tell you that you have saved me from a living death, and yet I want you to believe that if at any time——"

"I beg you will say nothing," she interrupted. "I wanted to do what I have done and I am glad that I could help you."

"Help is too poor a word. I cannot understand how I could have been cured so quickly. It seems like a miracle. How do you account for it?"

"As I look at it," she explained, "it seems of easy solution. I believe that no real energy, no real desire is ever quite lost. If one desire disappears it will be succeeded by another. Something else for which you craved with equal longing may have sprung into being and taken the place of your abnormal appetite for the drug. Who can tell?"

"Something else for which I craved with equal longing?" he echoed. "In my case what could it be, I wonder? Please give me your opinion of it. Do you know?"

"I? Why—how should I know? You are better able to answer that yourself. Perhaps it was your desire for— for life—when the end loomed near."

"Ah, no—it could not have been that because—I am quite sure I did not care to live, at least, not then."

"You did not care to live—then?" she asked.

"No, I did not. It is only since—you came into my life that—that—things have changed—for me." If she was aware of the meaning, or the change in his manner, she made no sign but continued in a matter-of-fact, explanatory tone: "Perhaps you are craving something subconsciously, which will present itself later, in definite form, when you least expect it."

"Like what, for instance?"

"Why—perhaps for a life devoted to higher and nobler things, or a new desire to live the life of an artisan, or an architect, in the work of the world instead of gathering toys and looking for new playgrounds, or it may be a keen, awakened longing for a natural want, like—like——" She paused and a faint, crimson tinge slowly covered the pallor of her face.

"The constant love of a good woman?" he added for her.

"Possibly. That would be a longing for a natural want, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, but—ah, no—no good woman could care for me." She was silent and would not meet his gaze. "Do you think there is one good woman in this whole world who could ever care for me?" he asked slowly.

"Why not?" she asked, looking at him steadily now. "Isn't it generally believed that for each male in the world his mate exists?"

"I did not think that you were quite so liberal in your ideas of the physical laws of the human race. You don't look like a girl who would believe that we are creatures of instinct and primitive passions, rather than beings of calculating reason and strong will."

"I—I have not always thought so," she said, half-defiantly, feeling herself at bay.

"When did you change your mind?"

"Oh—really, what does it matter if I now believe that every Jill wants her Jack and every Jack can find his Jill? Women are prone to do the contradictory as well as the unreasonable thing. Perhaps it is this which always brings the stronger sex to our feet. You know,

it is the intricate puzzle which attracts those who would solve it."

"Then you think it is a question of the right woman? Where is she, I wonder?"

"When the right woman comes I suppose you will know it as I shall probably know it when the right man comes. There was a time when I had no faith in the theory that the mate could surely find the other one."

"I asked you once when you changed your mind—but you—would not tell me. Will you tell me now *what* has changed your mind in this respect?"

"How can I tell? I—I can't explain it except that—one's ideas are apt to change concerning many things."

"But something is the reason," he insisted, "there would have to be a reason for one like you, and you—you are the kind of a girl who would know the reason." Up to this moment there had been strong repression evidenced in the attitude of both. Underneath the surface of this conventional discussion was running a current of vital feeling; both felt it—both knew it. Each fleeting glance they had exchanged was a challenge, every tone of their voices lay bare what surged beneath the surface in spite of all assumed reserve and indifference. Nearer and nearer they had been drawn by the power of that magnet, the strength of which no two such as they have ever been able, or ever will be able, to withstand. He was the first to smash the bounds of restraint. Abruptly he stood on his feet and the intensity of his manner, and the fervor of his voice when he spoke, made her tremble like a wind-shaken leaf. Slowly, she too arose from her chair, meanwhile holding his eyes with the power of her luminous, pleading gaze as he spoke to her in a voice which vibrated through every fiber of her being:

"Then you think that the female will answer the call of her mate when she hears it, or else the mate must follow the example of the original man who went forth with a club, beat his mate-to-be with it and carried her to his cave? It is a far cry to the day of the

primitive savage, but do you believe in it? Should the man take her by force if he has to?" Though he spoke in a whisper, careful lest his voice be heard by Mrs. Marcum, still every word was impassioned and through it all her eyes never left his face, reading him through and through, searching his very soul. She did not speak though her lips moved, and as they opened and closed he easily understood her reply, which was:

"*He should!*"

As he started for her impulsively, her courage seemed to vanish and she raised her hand beseechingly, but the man bent on conquest could not be stayed. Then she retreated from him and he followed her around the table.

"No, no—Harry!" she cried. "Don't you hear me, Harry? I entreat you not to, you—you frighten me so! Oh, I don't know what I am saying! I beg of you not to. Harry, do you hear me? You must not. I want a little time—just a little time, please," she pleaded. He shook his head and followed her doggedly while she kept retreating, keeping just out of reach. "If you take me in your arms I shall give way—I know I shall! Harry, please wait! Oh, what will you think of me? It's all wrong—*wrong* I tell you! Won't you be patient? This is madness—we ought to—we must be—calm!"

"Betty," he called, and she paused. He placed a hand on each shoulder. "Look at me, Betty," he said, and she did so. He held her thus for an instant and then said:

"Speak!"

It was a command and yet it carried a world of longing and the fulness of an undying love with it. For the last time she sought to escape surrender, but further resistance was beyond her power and, throwing her arms about his neck, she breathed in a wild passion of tears:

"Oh, yes, yes, YES!"

For a moment he held her close until her sobs ceased and she had mastered the reckless abandon which had swayed her. Then she spoke:

"My dear, my dear, just be kind to

me. I shall ask very little, but I freely give a great deal."

"This hardly seems true," he said brokenly. "I am shaken with the wonder of it all. I don't deserve it—I never could." She smiled at him through her tears.

"All my beliefs are being shattered one by one." Yet she spoke without a single regret.

"When did you first find it out?" he asked.

"Ages and ages ago," she replied in a distant voice. "I have just been waiting—that's all."

"Oh, girl, what a glorious smile you have," he said impulsively.

"Oh, boy," she answered, "I didn't suppose two people were ever so foolishly happy, and we are foolish, aren't we?" He gave her a playful shake. How she gloried in the strength of his hands!

"Certainly not," he said. "But come—there is much you should know." He led her to a chair and sat beside her. "Why was it," he asked, "you would never let me say anything about myself—all the other times?"

"Why, it would not have been professional, would it?" she retorted. "And now, well—your personal affairs *do* rather concern me." It was marvelous, he thought, how her face had lightened and changed under the spirit of roguery which now possessed her. She played upon him with the witchery of her dark eyes, but he shook it off and returned to his task.

"I have simply told you that my name is Harry Ogden," he said. "Just think of it! Look what we are to each other!—just see what all this means to us!—and then consider how little you know about me or where I came from!"

"Oh, my dear," she replied quickly, "as if that had anything to do with it, or is of any consequence!"

"Tell me, Betty, do you like the name—Ogden?"

"Mrs. Ogden?" Then she mischievously parried his question, by remarking in a bored manner: "Jane, you may say that Mrs. Ogden is not at home. Mrs. Ogden?" she laughed. "It seems

to reek with money and Fifth Avenue. Am I not absurd, Harry?" After a moment's reflection, he answered:

"That will be our home, Betty. That avenue of opulence and of show."

"What do you mean?" she asked, startled.

"Just what I say."

"Have you a great deal of money, Harry?"

"More than we could possibly spend in our lifetime." She pondered over this for a moment and then spoke decisively:

"Then we ought to do much good in the world, and now, Harry," coming closer and sitting at his feet so that one elbow rested on his knee, she looked up at him and said simply:

"You may tell me all. Hide nothing from me, Harry, because, you know, whatever has gone before is wiped out now." His hand rested gently on her hair and stayed there until she reached up and took it between both her own.

"It's a short story," he said, "and I'll let your imagination supply what I could never tell you. I was born and bred to a life of idleness and such I have always lived. I followed the usual routine and lived the terrible monotonous life which is the common lot of the idle rich. Men with my wealth are never trained for the dual life of public service and a strictly conventional existence. If I had capabilities I did not know it, if I had other desires than those for which I should be ashamed, they lay dormant within me. I had no ambition, no good desire to scorch me like a continual fire, no one to awaken me and show me that it was my duty to take up either a business or a profession. Therefore, it is not long before a life all play becomes work, and the very hardest kind of work.

"To such as I, New York—that great city of lost hopes, with its treeless streets, its brilliant lights, its incessant roar and restless energy, its formal frivolity, all froth and veneer—saps out a man's ambition and crushes his vitality like you would squeeze a sponge dry. First, new games; second, new toys; third, new sensations—and there you

have the three curses of the city: games, toys, and sensations. I ran the whole gamut of games, played with the toys both new and old, and when the craze for new sensations reached me I knew I was lost—but what did I care? Sensations I had, one after the other in rapid order, and in my exploring for a new sensation along came the morphin habit. Explorers get lost and their inevitable fate came to me. I was conquered, only partly so, however, and I had enough manhood left to believe that new scenes might help me. So I started for the West—alone."

"Oh, my dear!" she interrupted, "in your condition and—alone!"

"Yes, alone. I had not used morphin from the time we left New Orleans until you gave it to me, but the longing for it finally drove me frantic and though I had resolved to fight against it with every ounce of my power, and as long as I could, I knew that as soon as we came to where there was a drug-shop I should procure a new supply."

"I am glad you made a fight, Harry," she said. "Everything is possible to the man who fights."

"When the train stopped at the station below I don't think I was altogether in my right mind. Anyway, when I saw your father's horse near the platform, an irresistible impulse seized me to ride off across the desert, as if I could gallop away and leave that fiendish disease behind me. Then, when they took me the next day—I don't remember much about it, and afterward, when I was more like myself and could realize just what the situation meant for me, I was glad, yes, glad because they were about to do only what I should have done to myself in a very short while."

"And to think," she said, "how very near they came to killing you!"

"And then you came," he continued, "all charm and grace and sweetness, with sympathy and tenderness in your eyes. I realized the depth of my degradation at last. So, you see what you have done! I am still as the clay beneath your feet. Will it pay to fashion me into a statue, Betty?"

"Oh, my dear, the clay is worthy of the potter."

"No, I shall not let you sink to my level."

"You have already risen to mine which, I am sorry to say, cannot seem very high to you."

"My life has been one of husks—I am only the worn-out shell of a human being. I have gambled—there is nothing I should not have done but what I have done to my fill."

"What is that to me when I love you?"

"I have been a rover—I am not safe—I have often risked too much."

"Because you are brave—there is nothing dishonorable in that."

"No, I can't do it! I am not worthy of it, Betty, and—it isn't fair to you."

"Come, sir, I am the best judge of that. And now—is there nothing else?" with a fond smile. For answer he slightly raised her head and kissed her tenderly, a kiss which she returned fervently, and so passionately that it startled him, yet he murmured:

"Your lips are like a rose but—more fragrant!"

"It is your rose, with all its fragrance, forever."

CHAPTER XII.

They sat hand in hand for what seemed to be a long, long time, silent and content in the fulsome present and supremely happy in rapt contemplation of a joyous future which had just opened to view visions of a never-ending peace and ecstasy in the life before them. She was the first to break the hallowed spell which encompassed them. She arose and said:

"Come, Harry, this is no time for dreaming. What are your plans?"

"To take the Golden Gate Express which goes through to-night. Then from San Francisco I shall wire East for funds. In three days—think of it, girl—in only three days I am coming back for you and then—where shall we go, dear heart—to Japan?"

"The place does not matter, Harry. It never does to the man and the girl."

"And I shall bring letters to prove to these vigilantes that I am still a worthy member of society," he said with a smile.

"Nonsense, Harry, that will be all right and father will be won over, I know. Why, he has never denied me anything in all his life."

"Oh, where has your father gone?"

"He has ridden to the express-agent at the depot for money to pay the miners to-morrow. Mr. Taylor asked him to go."

"I should not consider it very safe to be abroad with much money at night, in this country," he said with a frown.

"It is dangerous," she answered, "and I am always worried when he is out at night. He has gone before, though, and I don't think any one will molest him. In any event," she said in mock seriousness, "if he is harmed there are only two people who can be charged with it—Mr. Taylor and yourself, because you two are the only ones who know that he has a large sum of money about him."

"Very well," he replied with a smile, "of course, if anything happens it would be just like you to charge it to me."

"I don't like you to say that, even in fun," she began, when Choo opened the front door far enough to put in his head and whisper:

"Some one down by corral! Look out!" Then his head withdrew.

"Quick, Harry," she exclaimed and nervously grasped his arm. "Father has come! He will be at the house in a few moments. Go around the other side of the house to the corral and take the horse which he leaves, I'll send to the station for it so it will not be missed. Then when you come on Thursday night you will find a horse at the station waiting for you. When you are coming along the trail look and see if there is a light here in that window. If there is you will know that everything is all right and you are to come to the house at once." He drew her to him again and said fondly:

"I shall watch for the light in the

window and think of the light in your eyes."

"Now don't delay, Harry—you must hurry. Never mind if you are bare-headed," she said, anxiously, "only go quickly." In her fear that something might happen to him, even at the eleventh hour, she insistently pulled his arm toward the door. He walked quickly to the entrance and opened the door, and now, womanlike, she took hold of him and held him back.

"You will remember in all the years to come, Harry," she said, her luminous, dark eyes shining out to him through wet lashes, "there never has been, there never will be, any one but—you!"

The next instant he had gone. From the other corner of the house came Choo. He saw her standing in the doorway still gazing in the direction Ogden had taken. She turned to Choo when she heard his step beside her on the veranda, then went back in the house. The servant followed her and closed the door.

"Choo," she said, "Mr. Ogden—that's his name—is coming back here on Thursday night. I have never, as you know, talked with you about this matter from the beginning because—it was not necessary to do so and—oh, well, you understand the whole situation perfectly, don't you?" He nodded his head affirmatively and she went on: "So it lies between you and me to set Mr. Ogden right with father and the rest of the people around here. We must explain everything to the satisfaction of all before Har—Mr. Ogden returns and a good deal depends on you. So, you will help me to—to unravel, to explain—you know what I mean?" He made no answer, neither did he look at her. She was nonplused and repeated her question:

"You will help me, won't you, Choo?" He was still silent.

"Why, Choo," she cried in growing amazement, "what has got into you, I'd like to know? How strange you act? Come, of course you will help me. I am depending upon you so much and, besides, it would be very unfair,

in you to desert me now." All unconsciously she had assumed an intimate tone and bent toward him pliantly. The fire in his glance and the new emotions struggling behind his mask of reserve were not lost to her as he swept his servile manner away and faced her. Involuntarily she recoiled and then—the whiplike crack of a revolver-shot sounded outside, causing both to fall back from each other. It had seemed to come from the trail in the direction of the corral.

"What—what do you suppose that was, Choo?" she asked and her face suddenly grew a dead white. Before he could answer two more revolver-shots followed in quick succession and from the same direction. She threw her hands on high and then dropped them heavily.

"They've shot him!" she said in a lifeless tone and then, turning like a tigress to Choo she lay hold of him fiercely and pushed him toward the door, crying:

"Quick, Choo! Help him if you can!" A moment passed on leaden wings. Nothing came to her ears to relieve the suspense, each second growing more and more unbearable. Could it be possible that now, after all that had taken place, he was—no, it *couldn't* be—there must be justice somewhere—and the Infinite One was a God of love who was kind—but why should He be kind to her? Had she not become a scoffer—had she not already begun to doubt? Yes, she had, and this was a just retribution—this was her punishment, she thought, for having dared to wander from His teachings. In an agony of terror she dropped to her knees and lifted her face.

"Oh, God," she prayed, "I have sinned—I am sorry—I have strayed from Thee and yet—grant me Thy mercy—*just once!* Oh, Christ in heaven—take all the world—but leave me—just this—one man!" Her supplication ended in a sob. For her this man alone existed. A voice outside called:

"Betty!" and she sprang to her feet.

"Some one is calling—me!" she said

in a frightened whisper, and then, as her name was called again and louder, she recognized it as the voice of Louis Taylor. Her limbs shook, and the old deadly, benumbing sensation returned, yet she managed to stagger to the front door and swing it wide, saying, as she did so:

"Yes—what is it—Louis?" She fell back to allow the entrance of Choo and Taylor who had reached the veranda by this time, and were half supporting and half dragging a man between them. When they had reached the threshold where the light could show her beyond question who their burden was, she looked to see—*her father!* They had carried him, with his head wobbling about in a sickening manner and his feet dragging along the floor, to the couch across the room, before she even moved. Then she rushed to his side and knelt beside him.

"What has happened?—who did it?—father!—dear old dad!" she cried in anguish, meanwhile hastily feeling his pulse and listening at his breast for heart-beats which came not. For an instant she looked at him, then gently and slowly lowered his eyelids with fingers which had no tremor. She stood up and turned to them with a face which might have been carved out of Carrara marble.

"He is dead!" she said.

"Dead!" they both exclaimed. Then her voice came, hard and metallic:

"Who has done this?" Neither spoke and she turned upon them savagely. "Answer me! Can't you speak? Are you both dumb?"

"Betty," said Taylor, stepping forward and seeking to soothe her, "you must try to calm yourself," but she waved him off and cried:

"I will know the truth—do you hear me?—the truth!" Hurriedly Taylor told his story.

"I had finished my writing at the mine office and started up here toward the house, taking the short cut around by the corral. When about half way up the path I saw the flash and heard the report of a revolver directly ahead of me. I should judge the flash was very

near the gate in the corral. After the shots were fired all was quiet. I ran as fast as I could up the path and as I neared the corral I saw a figure running. I fired twice but don't think I hit him."

"Him?" she said in a low, tense voice. "Who was it?"

"It was dark and too far away, so I could not tell, although I should say he was a tall man and I would swear he was bareheaded!" Her eyes closed and one hand went to her forehead.

"Bareheaded?" she said in a whisper and then in a half-scream: "Bareheaded—oh, my God!—and then?"

"I heard a moan and found your father lying in the trail only a few feet from me. I spoke to him but he could not answer me as he was unconscious. Then the Chinaman came and we brought your father here." Once more she turned to the couch and bent over the body; then she spoke in a voice barely audible:

"His pockets are inside out—the money is gone! He was shot—from behind! He was murdered and robbed!" From the hall door Mrs. Marcum burst in upon them, her gray hair flying and one hand clutching her loose dressing-gown.

"In Heaven's name, what has happened?" and then, seeing the body on the couch she wailed: "John! Dead! Betty, my child!" and started toward her. Betty halted her with a wide swing of both arms.

"Keep away from me," she cried in a voice full of suppressed hatred. "Keep away from me, and don't touch me, I say—all of you!" She walked to the open door and looked out. From the distance came the faint whistle of the Golden Gate Express eating up the miles of alkali in its headlong rush to the Pacific. She turned and faced them and said without the faintest break in her voice:

"I know who did this!" As one person they all cried in answer:

"You know?"

"Yes, I know," she replied in the same calm, even voice—"I know it just as sure as I know that the sun will

rise to-morrow morning, I know it just as well as I would if I had witnessed the act myself. The man who did it was in this house, here in this room, only ten minutes ago. The man who did it has been in and out of the house for a week past, accepting my father's hospitality and imposing on his daughter." Mrs. Marcum appealed to Taylor.

"Louis, can't you see her mind is wandering? Betty, come to me." She held out her arms.

"No," cried the girl, "I wish my mind were wandering—I wish it were a blank forever! I suppose it is hard to believe what I say, but I am speaking the truth. The man who did this was the man the vigilantes were going to hang for stealing father's horse and whom I—who escaped and came here. Yes, he came back here and I hid him—I was the one who concealed him. It was all wrong and this—this is my pay for it. He—he was helpless and alone and I—I was sorry for him." Here for the first time her voice wavered and broke. "'Cast thy bread upon the waters'—I trusted him and he lied, he tricked me and then—then he destroyed the life of a man who was kind and considerate to every one, a man who never willingly injured the feelings of one human being. He shot him from behind—the liar!—the thief!—the cowardly murderer!" Mrs. Marcum dropped into a chair and covered her ears with her hands.

"This is horrible!" she moaned, rocking herself back and forth. "Betty, my dear, you must not—you don't know what you are saying!"

"Hush! Hear me out!" she commanded, and went on: "After all, no one is really different from the blood which brings one into being. Education may give a reasoning mind, but when the voice of nature calls reason and the law of the land are blotted out." Taylor attempted to take her arm and said:

"Betty, please stop. You are only working yourself into a——"

"Will you be quiet!" she cried fiercely. "Hear me through. And so, that man can no more escape the conse-

quences of his own deliberate act than I can free myself from the customs and traditions of my own people, which are—not justice, but vengeance—aye, vengeance inexorable. Therefore this man belongs to me and to me he shall come on his knees.” Her rage seemed to recede for a moment, but her voice was not one whit less cold, as she turned now to Taylor:

“Louis—a week ago you did me the honor to ask me to become your wife. If you are still of the same mind, I will—I will marry you and fulfil my duty to you as a faithful wife, but on one condition only, which is, that you are to assist me, and to do my bidding absolutely, in trapping this man, this man who must pay the penalty. Are you willing?”

Taylor had been standing while she was speaking, like a man suddenly stricken, yet now as her full meaning dawned upon him he bowed his head to her. She stretched forth her hand and he took it. “Then I call upon you all to witness my solemn pledge”—she drew her hand away and continued in a voice near to tears—“in three days this man will return. Why? Because like all murderers he cannot escape that hideous fascination which always attracts a murderer back to the scene of his crime.” Here Taylor roused himself.

“Betty,” he said sharply, “you mustn’t go on in this way. Please take her up-stairs, Mrs. Marcum! She is——”

“In three days,” Betty continued, as though talking to herself, “three days of endless waiting—three days of ceaseless watching for the seconds, the minutes, and the hours to pass by on wings and give him up to me—to me alone! Oh, for the unspeakable joy of that moment when he comes, when he will see the light in the window and walk into the trap, when I have wrapped the meshes round him tight, and then—when I can look beyond to Dead Man’s Gulch and see him in the evening wind, swinging—swinging—swinging to and fro——” Again Taylor broke in roughly:

“I tell you this is all wrong,” he said. “If she hasn’t lost her reason she soon will if this is allowed to continue. You must take her away, Mrs. Marcum, and quiet her if you possibly can. I should not have remained here even as long as this because there is much to do—this man must be captured. Choo, you and I will——”

He paused when he caught the steady, glistening eyes of the servant fastened on him. In fact, those piercing black eyes had never left Taylor’s face from the time Colonel Breckenridge had been brought into the lighted room. There was a strange curl to Choo’s lips and his white, even teeth showed in a peculiar smile, a smile fairly terrifying in its dangerous suggestiveness.

“I say he will come back,” continued Betty, in a half-hysterical voice. “Do you hear? He will come back because he will need me and he cannot stay away. In three days he will return—he will stand here in this room, he will look at me, as no one else ever could, as he did to-night! He will take me in his arms and tell me that, ha—ha—ha——! my lips are as fragrant as the rose! He *will* come back! How can I tell? How do I know? Because to-night and every night until I die, and long after that, I will call to him and he will hear the call of his mate because—in spite of all—I *am his mate!*” For a moment she paused and her eyes swam in tears. One hand went to her bosom as though to stay the pain in her heart. “He was the one man for me,” she cried with an untold longing. “Oh, aunty—my heart—my heart—is breaking!”

And mercifully her senses left her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Thursday night! The space between had been passed in a semidaze. The tragedy had caused an unprecedented furore even in a land where killings were not uncommon and where funerals were simply a necessary accompaniment. How she had passed through it all she could hardly realize unless it was that a savage desire for retaliation and

revenge had buoyed her up and driven into the background the anguish and remorse of her father's death and the part thereof in which, she believed, she had been an unwitting tool. The emotion which surged uppermost was this uncompromising demand for vengeance and to this alone she hearkened, and now when she entered the living-room, this room which had been so fraught to her with life's contrasts and the sting of death, a feeling obsessed her which was strangely akin to ecstasy. She placed a small hand-satchel on the table and perceived Choo standing at one of the front windows, gazing off in the direction of the trail.

"What time does the train arrive from the west, Choo?" she asked.

"Eight o'clock," he answered. She looked at her watch.

"Then he should be here not later than half-past eight," she said. "It ought not to take him longer than half an hour to reach here from the depot."

"Yes, he ought to be here—then," replied Choo laconically, "if he comes."

"If he comes? If he *comes*?" she repeated. "What is to prevent his coming? I know there is no power on earth to keep him from me. He will come—he must come. He has yet to pay a debt to me and he will pay the debt he owes—justice. What time does the train leave for the west?"

"Ten o'clock. The train he comes on and the train for the west pass each other at Laramie."

"Ten o'clock! The same train on which he left—three nights ago! Three days and nights of anguish in which centuries of time have rolled on and on and smothered me. Choo, I want you to have two horses, one with my saddle, and tie them near the gate inside the corral. I shall take that ten o'clock train going west—what few things I need are in this satchel."

"Where are you going?" he asked abruptly. To her this seemed a perfectly natural question since, somehow, during the past three days, that unsurmountable barrier between mistress and servant had been obliterated. True, he had waited upon her without a change

in his manner, even to anticipating her slightest wish as of old and yet, the transition from servant to friend had taken place and was now complete. It was therefore not surprising that this man whom she knew to be her equal by birth and education should peremptorily inquire as to her destination.

"I don't know where I am bound," she answered readily, "I hardly know what I am doing. I only know that to spend an extra moment in this place is—impossible. I wonder where Louis is? He should be here now. I hope he has arranged everything as I told him. It is for you to remember, Choo, that we are to start immediately after I—after that man is—don't fail me! I am depending on you."

"I shall not fail you. Don't you—trust me?"

"Trust you? You know I have always trusted you—it could not be otherwise. You have ever been faithful, devoted and kind. You will always be the only pleasant remembrance I shall have of this dreadful country."

"It is, as you say, a dreadful country," he replied. He was silent a moment as though turning over and over a complex problem in his mind and when he spoke his voice had a note of wistfulness which struck her as being inexpressibly sad.

"Have you ever been to China?" he asked.

"No," she said, "I have not. Why do you ask?"

"Because I think you would like it there. Ah, yes," he said, as she shook her head negatively, "it is because you do not understand. The real China is not the China America knows. We have many of your fair American women married to men of birth and money of my country, and no American wife of that kind of a man has ever been unhappy."

"Well?" she said. It was an invitation, and he proceeded.

"You make me think of a lady who will some day marry a cousin of mine. He was in my class at—New Haven. I met her there and I—but perhaps you are not interested?" he asked, pausing.

"Yes, indeed I am," she hastened to say. "It also occupies my mind. Tell me more about them."

"She is very, very beautiful," he continued and she wondered at the sudden flash in his dark eyes as he measured her silently for an instant with his keen gaze. "Very beautiful," he repeated, "and a form which—which I never expect to see equaled again. He fell in love with her in your foolish American way, without thought or reason. He had to have her—that is his case."

"And what about her?" she asked.

"She?—oh, she did not know he lived in the same world with her until one day she realized that he had a brain and heart just like her own people, who have a way of carrying their minds in their face and their affections in their arms."

"How—how did she find this out about him?"

"The knowledge came as the sun comes over the desert every morning—because it has to." She was silent and he went on. "The girl was prejudiced—the girl of whom I speak—against him because——"

"Of his color?" she interposed.

"No, on account of his—race. It could not have been birth, because his people were known, they had a language and practised the arts when her people lived in caves. It could not have been his Chinese characteristics, because he was Americanized thoroughly. He dressed like her own people, had most of their habits and only a few of their vices. He was the coxswain on his varsity crew and was received everywhere, as he should have been. He made love to her in his own way, showing his affection by what he did—not by what he said. He was not hot-blooded and impetuous and so, she did not know, she cared for him until—until——"

"Until—when?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I was simply trying to get your opinion whether or not you think she is doing wrong in marrying him," he said; "never mind about her love for

him. You ought to be a good judge of the case—what do you think?"

"Was her heart entirely free?"

"She had—cared for another man."

"Had she given him up—entirely?"

"No one could answer that but herself."

"Then unless she had said she had ceased to care for the first man, it would be useless for—your cousin to ever hope to—win her. If it were I—that is the only way I should feel. I would tell—your cousin—that there was absolutely no hope for him if I were the one he—wanted. The question of two people being joined who belong to races so wide apart can be of no moment to her. She will only consider, that is—I assume she does—whether she has a right to give herself to—this cousin of yours after having once belonged——"

"I beg your pardon," he interrupted, "I said—she *cared* for him."

"Yes, but I think that if she was the kind of a girl you say she is, she must have *belonged* to that other man for all time. If I were the girl and, well, suppose you were the man—I should tell you frankly that there was—absolutely—no hope—for *you*."

His eyes had never left her face while she was talking, and now as she concluded, he turned his back to her, walked to the window again and stood looking off into the distance. Presently he turned to her, his face as expressionless as a stone even though it had grown seamed and hard all in the twinkling of an eye.

"In a little while you will go," he said calmly, "and then—then what do you suppose will become of me? Have you given that any thought?"

"You?—oh, you—will go back to China, I know, and bring your people a new light."

"A new light?" he repeated, his voice betraying a deep sarcasm ill concealed. "To what avail? Has it any advantage over the old light?"

"Of all men," she answered, "you ought to know whether it has or not. You know the new light is the uplifting message which higher education has

always brought to people wandering in the darkness of ignorance. You must show them what an advanced civilization means—show them what great benefits it has brought to us.”

“Yes, and have my head taken off before I can even change my clothes after arriving in China!”

“That is not a good argument. You should willingly give your head if that would help your country. China is your country and patriotism should guide you. The greatest nation in the world arose from the blood of its patriots.”

“It seems a foolish way to go about it—there ought to be an easier and more satisfactory method. I should like to teach them—ah, if I could!—the truth!”

“That is it!—the truth! You should teach them that truth is the important, the supreme thing of this life, and that in truth is the one great hope for all of us in the unknown realm beyond.”

“Truth?—truth is not the best thing in the world—oh, no!”

“Ah, yes it is, Choo—don’t let anything make you think differently, no matter what it is. Truth—and the golden rule. Was it Confucius who said: ‘Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you?’” She paused and her expression changed. Then she whispered the maxim again. “And what am I doing to another?” she said aloud. “But I don’t care,” she added, “he lied, he cheated, he tricked me!—and now—he must pay!”

There was a loud knock on the front door. Her hands clasped in sudden fright and she opened her lips but could not speak. In response to a motion from her hand, Choo stepped to the front door and opened it slowly, meanwhile looking out, then he swung it wide with a quick jerk and stepped to one side. It was Louis Taylor. He stepped into the room, however not without first having bestowed an ugly look at the broad back of Choo, who now for the third time had taken his same position at the window.

“You are late,” she said without looking at him. He was evidently ill at ease and a queer pallor had come to his

face. When he spoke his voice was husky and now and then it quivered, at which times he stammered and moistened his wet lips.

“Yes, I know I’m late,” he said, “but I had the devil’s own time in getting the men together and harder work in keeping them in check. In fact, ever since they have learned that he is expected back here at the house, they have been fairly crazy to shoot him to pieces. It has been only by the strongest kind of arguments and the promise of increased wages all around that I have been able to prevail upon them to be sane, for a little while, at least, and not lynch him as soon as he stepped off the train. I told them what you wanted to do, that you asked them, as a special favor to you, to let you use your own method and that I had agreed you might. They finally accepted this and yet they do not seem to understand why you want them all to stay away from the house and remain down at the mine office until you call them by ringing that bell. I—I—I confess I do not see through it all myself. What—are your reasons for going about it in this way?”

“I do not want a hair of his head harmed until I have dealt with him. My other reasons are my own,” she said curtly. “You are also to stay away from here and remain at the mine with the men—until—I ring the bell. Remember this must be done absolutely as I wish. When you hear the gong ring three times—don’t forget that it is to ring three times! This will tell you that I am through—with him, and you are free to come and get him—and take him—and do with him—as you will.”

“That’s all right, but your plans may miscarry. You know, it is going to take us several minutes to get here after you ring the bell. This will give him plenty of time to get away again, if he becomes suspicious and wants to do so. You are only a girl and—not very strong.”

“Never fear—I shall have him safe—I shall hold him securely, even though not by the strength of my hands.”

“All right, Betty, I leave it to you.

What's become of your aunt? I have not seen her around anywhere?"

"She has gone to spend the night with Mesquite. She did not care to remain here. The scenes of the past few days have been too much for her. She will return in the morning. I have made up my mind to leave here to-night, Louis. I am going to San Francisco. Auntie does not know this—so be sure and tell her when she comes. As soon as I arrive in San Francisco, I will send a telegram to the operator at the station below and you will have to arrange with him to get it. This telegram will tell you when to come for me and where to find me."

"But what are you in such a hurry for, Betty?" he asked suspiciously.

"Because I could not live in this place one second longer. I think there is only one thing more and this is the most important thing of all—to place the light up there in the window." At this Choo left his station at the window, opened the front door, and passed out. Taylor started to take the lamp from the center-table but she waved him aside and picked it up herself.

"You don't know how much pleasure it gives me to do this," she said. "It is fitting that I should be the one to place the light where he can see it and be assured that all is well—yes, all is well—ha-ha-ha!—he will look at the light in the window and think of the light in my eyes," and she laughed again.

"Betty!" he said. "You must be careful!"

"Careful? It is too late for that now and so there is no need of my being careful in anything from now on. The past was the time for caution—the future must take care of itself. And what do I care about myself?" in reckless disdain.

"I can see you are not yourself," he said, growing more alarmed at her increasing agitation.

"Oh, yes, I am," she made haste to say; "do not be alarmed, Louis. My brain is clear. I shall not falter, nor shall I forget my promise to you. I don't see why—what I have passed

through—father's death, the burial to-day, and the anticipation of that man's coming have not driven me into a frenzy, but I am calm, am I not?" A sudden twitching seized her fingers which she tried to hide by clasping her hands. He detected the effort and, stepping toward her, said intensely:

"I have a good mind to——"

"You are mistaken, Louis," she interrupted. "See—I have perfect mastery of myself!"—yet despite her efforts to appear self-contained she bit her lips and her breath came spasmodically. "And I shall have myself under—perfect control," she continued, "when that man comes, and now you must leave me out of consideration and think of yourself because it is you who have forgotten something. I can see it and it will do you no good to deny it. It is the only thing I shall ask of you—please do not drink again to-night? It is not only unsafe to do so at this time, but it is wrong in itself and it leads—no one can tell where."

"Why—why—yes, of course, Betty—if it is your wish," he said, staggered for the moment by her keenness of observation when he had considered her lost in a maze of racking emotions. "Probably I did drink more to-day than I ought—and I guess all the men have done the same, but I shall stop it, never fear. However, I can't answer for that mob of miners and cow-punchers who will be satisfied, I know, with nothing but—a killing."

"Then let them have their killing," she said tragically, walking back and forth across the room. "Let them begin on him and then—let them kill to their fill from among themselves." She paused and her voice lowered. "And now—it is a question of minutes"—she pointed to the window—"now he's coming along the trail—now he's looking up here—now he sees the light in the window!—I'm calling to him—in my heart I am calling to him and he is coming—yes, he's coming as fast as the horse will bring him—because—he is hastening—to the call—of his mate." The weariness, the utter woe, of her voice almost made him beside himself.

"Betty!" he said, in a passion of feeling and taking hold of her hands, "I don't know why I allow you to go on in this manner. It is preposterous." She snatched her hands away and walked from him. "It is without rhyme or reason. It is absurd to think he will return. Why should he come back here—he a—a—murder——" She wheeled and shot her words at him forcibly.

"Yes, yes—I know, I know there is no reason in it. Why should he come back when he has robbed and murdered? True—why should he?—and yet he *will*—I *know* he will!" She stopped and then asked him in a voice which sent chills over his body: "Don't you think so?" He turned his head away but answered in a voice hardly distinguishable:

"Yes."

"Ah, I knew you did," she exclaimed triumphantly, then suddenly paused and demanded in a way which would admit of no subterfuge: "What—what makes *you* think he will come back?" He made no answer and then after a slight interval she added in an ominous voice:

"Well, I am—listening?"

His face grew a shade lighter and one hand went to his throat, as though his collar were very tight. Then he walked to the sideboard and helped himself to a drink, and all the while she watched him like one fascinated. He wiped his mouth with his handkerchief with an ease of manner which was belied by the shaking fingers which drew the linen across his lips.

"Oh, what makes me think he will come back?" he asked, repeating her question. "I don't know as I have thought very much about the reason—about why I thought—why—because *you* think he will return, I guess—yes, that's why I think so."

"So *that* is your reason, is it?" she said, almost contemptuously. "Well, Louis, take a good look at me!" She stood before him and turned her splendid figure completely around. "Mark well every grace. Note what nature has done for me—and then ask yourself if any man would not come back for me. Am I not worth it? Wouldn't you

come back for me?" While she talked a deep red had stung his face hotly and his eyes glistened with a new light not pleasant to see. Anticipating his movement, she recoiled quickly from him as he started for her, and gave a peculiar, mocking laugh when he said between his closed teeth:

"Yes—you are worth a thousand deaths—a thousand worlds!"

"Wait! Not yet!" she cried, and he halted. "You have a bargain to fulfil—stop where you are! He is apt to come any moment—go at once—now!" For a second only he eyed her—then passed out the front door, closing it behind him. She never moved until the sound of his footsteps had died away, going in the direction of the mine. Then she sat down at the table and closed her eyes, wearied unto death.

"Oh, let me not fail," she cried, as though doubtful of the ordeal before her. "Am I the pilot of my mind? Am I the master of my soul? I am adrift on a sea of illusions. I shall see him to-night for the last time—the very last time on this earth. Once more," she whispered, "only—once more!" Suddenly she clenched her hands until the nails dug into the flesh and her lips opened as if she were about to scream. Out on the trail she had heard a whistle—a man's cheery whistle, and this was followed by some one humming a tune. Steps sounded on the veranda. The door behind her opened.

CHAPTER XIV.

She knew he was standing at the threshold—she could feel the soft fire of his eyes on her hair—she knew he was waiting for her to turn and rush to his arms. Again the old benumbed feeling closed upon her and she fought against the deadly sensation as one fights from falling into a yawning chasm. She arose to her feet but did not face him. He came to where she stood and folded his arms about her.

"Look at me!" he said. "Let me see the welcome in your eyes!"

"It has been a long, long time," she said. His arms tightened.

"For me it has been three days in a wilderness—three nights in purgatory—an eternity of time. I wandered forsaken, and then—from the trail below I could look and see the gleam in the window, a beacon calling me to a safe haven." Slowly she turned and looked at him.

"So you came when you saw the light in the window, did you?"

"Yes, it was your cheerful message of faith and hope—speeding out to me across the night, and bidding me come where a warm, tender heart was waiting."

"Have you—have you missed me?"

"Missed you? It has been three days without the music of your voice, three nights without the glory of your presence. Since I left there has been no sun, no joy or sweetness in the world for me, but now—I have traveled the road of desire—now I am back in the land of pure delight. I can——"

"Ah, desire?—desire!" She broke from his embrace and walked away. "Oh, don't, *don't*, don't!" He laughed good-naturedly, and at this a sudden trembling seized her.

"Why, Betty!" he exclaimed, "has anything happened or am I too sentimental? Tell me if anything has occurred?" She whirled about and faced him.

"What do you think could occur?" she demanded.

"Why, girl—how strange you are! I—I can think of nothing except—that I am here—that I see you again. It is the only thing in the world which matters to me."

"I—I am not very—well to-night."

"Not well?"

"No, you see—I guess—I—I did not obtain father's consent!"

"You didn't? But—you placed the light in the window!"

"Oh, yes—I made sure of that." A queer smile flickered across her face, flickered again and disappeared. "You know, I—I wanted you to come in the front door like a man—not skulk about like a thief in the night."

"That is as it should be, of course,

but never mind, after we are married your father will not care, I'm sure."

"No, I guess he will not care," she said in a hollow voice.

"Where is your father?" he asked. She walked straight up to him with staring eyes and said:

"He has—gone—home!"

"Home? Wasn't it unexpected?"

"It was—like lightning from a clear sky."

"You alarm me, Betty. Your manner is so weird. You are—evidently not yourself to-night. Come, don't let us talk of your father," taking hold of her hand; "aren't there other things of equal interest?" He patted her hand and all the while she watched his face intently. "Sit down here beside me," he continued, leading her to a chair and, after seating himself, gently forcing her to rest at his feet, "you remember, don't you, Betty, as you did—that night? There, that will be more comfortable. Now tell me all about it. What is the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter. I—I prefer to speak of my father."

"Very well—as you wish. What is best to be done? Shall I go to him?"

"Yes—I am sure you will!"

"Of course I will, that is, if you say so."

"I shall say so—be sure of that."

"All right, little girl, when shall I see him?"

"Perhaps it will not be long."

"It must necessarily be several days if he has gone home."

"It may be a shorter journey than you imagine!"

"Oh, come, Betty!" he said with a note of alarm in his voice, "all this talk is utterly without meaning to me. You are ill or on the verge of a serious illness. It is selfish of me in keeping you here when you should be in bed. That's the place for you—all tucked in, as snug as a bug in a rug. What you need is a good long rest."

"Rest? There is no such word! I have—no one to tuck me in."

"Ah, but you will have and very soon, I trust. Some one who is big and

strong and—gentle, I hope. You have been worried about me and the reaction has come. What you have suffered on my account is responsible for it all."

"What I have suffered on your account?" she said, and then repeated it in a lifeless manner.

"But that is all over now," he added. He placed a hand on her hair and she shrank from him. "Yes, it is all over now."

"Or it will be soon!" She felt his movement as if he were going to arise, and she hastened to say: "Oh, don't mind me to-night. I am morbid. My mind is depressed. All day long it has been wrought with the thought of death!" She looked up at him and he laughed down at her.

"Death?" he said. "Why, you surprise me, Betty. You shouldn't think of death. It is a very foolish pastime—this thinking of death. My philosophy has always been—never to think of death until death beckons."

"Not until death beckons?" she echoed. "Do people usually know when death is beckoning?"

"Some often have a premonition of approaching death. Such cases are not uncommon."

"I wonder if that is really so? I have heard of it but I never believed it." Again she turned to eye him steadily through lids nearly closed and even though half-veiled the glint of her eyes seemed to pierce him through. "Suppose it were you," she went on, "that were about to die, do you think you would know, that something would tell you, that—out there in the desert, or—over at the mine—death, *certain death*, was waiting you with arms outstretched, or might even be close to you in this room right here—grinning at your elbow?" and she smiled up at him.

"Why, I am quite sure I should know it," he laughed, "and especially if the grim reaper were making his presence known in so many different places."

"My mind is running in all directions to-night," she said, after hesitating slightly, "and another thought has occurred to me. I wonder what you think

would justify the taking of human life, that is, without due process of law?"

"Without a trial? Without a fair hearing?" he asked. She nodded. "Well, on that question I must confess I am rather old-fashioned—something of a Kentuckian. I am free to say that I would avenge the—unspeakable crime, or the wanton murder of one of my family, with personal vengeance—I would make it a retribution swift and certain."

"And you—you—are the one to say that!"

"Of course, why shouldn't I? And yet, I should have to be absolutely sure, I should want proof—proof incontrovertible—guilt would have to be established beyond the shadow of a doubt!" She bent over and buried her face in her hands, crying in a low tone:

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt, but—there is no doubt! Let me think! Let me think!"

"And now, after all this wild, gruesome talk, there should be a pleasanter topic of conversation for us, don't you say so, Betty? You must be interested in where I went and what I have seen since I left you, aren't you?" Her manner was preoccupied and yet she nodded her head affirmatively. "Well, the first thing I had to think of," he resumed, "was money—money for the honeymoon and for the first time in my life I was glad to get hold of money, glad because I was going to spend it—on you. Heretofore money never appealed to me by reason of its purchasing power, but simply because it was a medium of exchange." He paused as though he was thinking over its new values and happy in the thought, perhaps, that now his great wealth would be placed where it would do good to others and add a little to the sum total of one woman's happiness. "It seems strange," he went on, "to get money in gold at the bank instead of bills and see?—I put heaps of it in my pocket." He took out a handful of the glistening gold coins for her inspection. She gazed fixedly at the bright double-eagles and then—shrank from him and whispered:

"That—that gold—that peculiar-shaped piece of gold—with the figures '49' stamped in it? Did—did they give you that—at the bank? Father—father had one—just like it—it was a pocket-piece!"

"Oh, that—that one I found on the trail the other night. I was standing near the corral and saw it glistening in the moonlight——" He paused in amazement as she now sprang to her feet and looked at him with a face of adamant and without a vestige of color. Her eyes shifted to the door and she raised a warning hand.

"What is it—what is the matter?" he asked.

"Some one is coming," she said in a frightened voice. "Quick! You must hide!"

"Why should I hide?" he asked, rising. "I have done no wrong, I have nothing to fear. From beginning to end this whole thing has been a misunderstanding and it is a matter which might just as well be straightened out now as any time." She stepped to him quickly and both hands clutched his arm. Then she fairly dragged him toward a closet in the corner of the room. Her apparent abject fear impressed him. He followed reluctantly, protesting against her idea as being ill advised.

"No, no, not yet," she cried. "Don't ask questions—I'll—I'll explain later. Here, in this closet!" She opened the door and he stepped within. The next instant she had turned the key in the lock. She faced about and her hands went up in the air in a gesture of reckless joy.

"At last!" she cried, "at last!" she repeated, and then laughed shrilly—the laugh of one suddenly stricken mad. She walked toward the table, meanwhile laughing immoderately and her hands opening and closing without cessation. "He was not satisfied," she cried exultantly—"he could not stay away—his freedom—and the gold—were not enough. He wanted more—he had to have the physical being, the animal of his nature must be fed. Oh, it's desire—all desire!" Her voice rose almost to

a shriek. "The map of the world has been changed many times just because a man has desired the body of a woman—and this man—is the same kind of a beast, only worse." Leaning forward she opened a drawer of the table and from the drawer took a small piece of rope. Then she walked rapidly to the closet where Ogden was locked. Raising the rope on high, she brought it down against the closet door with all her strength and repeated this again and again in a veritable spasm of hatred. She ceased striking the door only when her pent-up fury of the moment had abated.

"Do you hear that?" she screamed. "Yes—I know you do!" And again she fell to beating the door with the rope in a vicious frenzy. She stopped only when her strength left her.

"I'm—I'm striking the door with a rope—a piece of rope!" she panted. "It's the rope which bound your arms behind your back when you were brought here less than ten days ago. It's the same rope I cut—you know I cut it, don't you? Yes, I cut it so that you could be free—free—free to come back here and kill and rob my father—free to shoot him from behind—you liar!—you cheat!—you thief!—you murderer! The least I can do in return is to tie the knot again when they come here for you—for they are coming—do you hear? They are coming to hang you when I ring that gong—three times. I shall pull the bell three times and you will hear your own death-knell sounded. If you were going to live until to-morrow you might hear my wedding-march being played, but when that sounds forth you will be swinging—ha-ha-ha!—swinging to and fro in Dead Man's Gulch! And all this is because I have also tricked you—it's all made possible for me because I placed that light in the window to deceive you. You will remember in the last few moments which remain—that it was I—who lured you—I who was waiting"—her voice fell and died away in a half-sob—"with a warm heart, tender and true." She ceased for an instant and waited for him to reply, but he remained

silent. "Well?" she cried in a voice which wavered and broke. "Well—why—don't you say something?" There was another pause and then she heard his voice speaking calmly in muffled tones:

"You must be mad—violently mad, to act like this!"

She threw back her head and again her shrill, unmirthful laugh rose on high.

"Mad? Mad, am I? Perhaps I am mad but not as you think, oh, no! I was mad when I cut that rope—mad when I nursed you all night long in the alfalfa-shed—mad when I let you come to this room, and mad indeed when I let you—let you—I won't recall my humiliation and degradation—but I am sane now! Did I not see the money which was in my father's pockets—the gold which was to pay the miners' wages—did I not see this same gold in the hands which were red with my father's blood? Oh, I'm mad! Yes, but only mad for vengeance!" She stopped in her tirade through sheer exhaustion, meanwhile listening for his answer, which came not.

"Well, why don't you deny it?" she challenged him. "Say something!"

His voice came from the closet low and even:

"It seems I am condemned without a hearing. The judge and jury are against me——" She interrupted him with a disdainful laugh and then leaned nearer that she might better hear. "You may do what you like," he continued, "but—even a dog should have a chance."

At this she staggered back from the closet and stood still, repeating over and over again as to herself, his remark: "Even a dog should have a chance." Slowly the terrible expression of dire hatred relaxed and in its stead came stealing a pathetic look of oppressive woe. "They will come and—kill—kill him," she breathed. "I'll—I'll give him a chance!" She tossed the rope in the drawer and shut it, walked quickly to the closet door which she unlocked and opened, then—without a look at him, sat down at the table.

CHAPTER XV.

Ogden walked over to her slowly, as though still in doubt if he were in his right mind. He placed his hat on the table and stood beside her a moment in silence. "Is this really you?" he finally asked. No answer. "And if it is—can it be you or I whose brain has flown?"

"You wanted a chance—so you intimidated—there is your way to freedom," she said shortly, pointing to the front door.

"Freedom? Oh, you must be mad!"

"I am mad indeed when I let you go—yes, yes, beyond all reason."

"It is your voice, your figure, and yet you are not the Betty of three days ago."

"You said even a dog should have a chance—I give it to you—as I would to—any dog!" This he ignored and went on in a pleading tone:

"Our world is all upside down. I wonder why? Can you tell me? Will you? What does it all mean?" As she did not reply he called to her:

"Betty!" She wrung her hands and begged:

"Oh, will you go?—*will you go!*"

"Yes, I'll go, Betty, but—not until I am convinced—of your sanity."

"Sanity? You may be sure of that. Won't you go?" she asked pitifully.

"I am not at all sure you are in your right mind," he said with decision. "Your conduct is inexplicable and smacks of the burlesque except that you may be under some delusion which would explain your otherwise unaccountable conduct. To do you justice, I don't think you are really in your right mind—you have forgotten many things, too many, in fact, to be reconciled with a normal condition."

"Suppose you suggest something which I have forgotten?"

"Do you remember my name?"

"Do I? It has rung in my ears through an eternity of time."

"Then you know it well—let me hear you say it." For answer she gave him one short look, a look which sent the blood tingling to his cheeks, and spoke

the word with all the loathing she could muster:

"Judas!"

"Judas?" he said, and recoiled as if she had struck him an unexpected blow in the face. "Judas?" he repeated, and took a position in front of her so that she was forced to see him when she raised her head.

"Ah, then I *am* accused—of a murder!—and all this is real?" he cried, his voice ringing through the room and his face growing strangely white. "I begin to understand a little—your father has been killed and I have been charged with his murder—by you—*by you!*—is that so?" The scorn in his voice was withering. She made no reply. "Answer me!" he fairly shouted, and she nodded her head. "And *you* have done this?" he cried. Again she would not speak. "Look at me! Look at me, I say!" he insisted, now fairly shaking with rage. She replied, with her head still lowered:

"I have looked at you—for the last time."

"Yes, after this, I don't wonder that you dare not look me straight in the eyes." He broke into loud laughter. "And you call me *Judas!*"

"You play your part poorly, and while you do not deserve an atom of mercy, for the last time I ask you to go." Her tone was lifeless.

"Just one thing more," he said. "I'm not sure about this, but did you say, when you had me locked in that closet, that you were to be married—to-morrow?"

"Yes, I said so—I shall be married to-morrow!"

"May I inquire the name of this most fortunate man?" His voice was low, dangerously low, and to his face had come a queer smile, a smile akin to cruelty. When she was silent he leaned nearer and sought to goad her.

"Can it be that you are ashamed to tell his name?"

"It is Louis Taylor," she said, without emotion.

"And so—this is what I hear from one who said only three days ago: 'You will remember in all the years to come,

Harry, there never has been—there never will be—any one but you!' That was what you said, and now—now I have returned to find my bride-to-be a waiting executioner! The arms outstretched invitingly are those of the hangman! What a miserable mockery, and yet—what a fitting climax to my life!"

"Even such a death would be only what you deserve—yet you are free to escape it." He turned upon her savagely.

"Oh, what's the use!" he said. "Why—don't you suppose I know you have some base motive in this comedy-drama you are playing? I only wish I could fathom your masquerading."

"I am hiding nothing—except you—and this will be to my lasting shame!"

"And I say you *are* hiding something, and it must be something despicable," he said with ever-increasing rage. "If you were honest in your belief that I did that awful thing and you really wanted me punished, then—why didn't you ring that gong and bring your homicide crowd here to hang me? Answer me that—will you?" Without warning she suddenly dropped her head upon one arm which was resting on the table, and burst into tears. "I'll speak for you," he added. "You did not ring that gong because in your heart you *know* I am not guilty—that's why!"

"No, no," she cried, "that is not the reason."

"And I say it is—there could be no other reason. I don't know why this fearful thing has been brought against me—I do know that you are the one who has said it—that is enough! Only one thing more remains for me to do. I might just as well as not ring down my own curtain, and at the same time perhaps you will realize how very little I care for life—or you either!" As he concluded he quickly walked over to the wire attachment hanging to the gong, seized it and brought down his arm three times, sending out into the night three resounding peals—the signal for the men at the mine! She was on her feet now and as he turned from the bell they faced each other.

"What—what did you do that for?" she asked brokenly, and her voice little above a whisper.

"And you—such a clever person as you are—can't you guess? Then I'll tell you," he laughed grimly; "at your wedding-feast to-morrow there will be—a death's-head!" For an instant she was speechless, but with the full purport of his remark, and a realization of his act, came the blow which shattered all lingering doubts.

"No, no—oh, my God, no!" she exclaimed in an agony of terror, "not that—no, not that!"

"I'm a murderer, am I, and my name is—Judas?" Whereupon she went to pieces completely, crying unrestrainedly and sobbing as if her heart were broken. In truth, considering the torture she had undergone her heart had long since been filled with anguish to the bursting-point.

"Oh, what have I done—what have I done?" she moaned. She held out her hands and called to him:

"Harry!" He turned from her with a bitter laugh. She walked across the room with halting steps and fell to her knees beside him. "You were right, Harry," she cried, "I was insane—I didn't mean to be insane—honestly, I didn't, Harry, and if I were I'm not altogether to blame, am I? In my heart I knew—always—that you were not guilty—but, Harry, the evidence——"

"Evidence?" he cried, "and what has evidence, no matter how strong, to do with you and me? There could be no evidence incriminating enough for you to think wrong of me—nothing that I could do——"

"Yes, yes, yes—I know, Harry," she feverishly interrupted, "I know about that now, Harry, but I didn't realize it before. I—I can see now that——"

"It is too late," he said harshly. She shook her head and stretched her clasped hands toward him, as if he had no right to say that to her.

"Nothing is too late, Harry, as long as everything works out in the end for our good," she argued beseechingly, but he was blind to all entreaty. Then she went on rapidly, her words coming tem-

pestuously and ending in a ferment of supplication:—

"Never mind how unfaithful and wicked I seem to be—only take me away and give me a chance to explain. Even now the men are probably coming from the mine on a run. Every instant is vital! See, I am pleading on my knees to you, Harry? Nothing I have done can change things with us, Harry, for I still belong to you—no one else could ever be as much to you as I can. I know you think just the same of me as you always did, no matter what you say. You are only punishing me now—aren't you, Harry? Please don't hurt me any more—just carry me off somewhere, some place where we'll be alone—only we two—and then let me talk to you, but not here! These wild miners and cattlemen will not listen—they'll hang you at once! Harry, please go and take me with you?"

"It is useless to say anything more. I said it is too late and—it is! I could never again be sure of you!" he said with an air of finality.

"Yes, you could, Harry, just as sure as that I am at your feet this moment. Let me tell you all about it, but not here—not here! Then if you don't believe me you may beat me or—do anything you like. Please do and won't you hurry?"

"No—I have lost faith in you," he said coldly, and looking at her with indifference. "To me you have committed the one unpardonable sin, and if it were possible to forgive you, it would not help any because I could never again—depend upon you."

"Don't say that, Harry." She begged piteously, and hurrying her words. "There is nothing else on earth for me but you. There never has been. Please take me away! I don't care where you take me or what you do with me—I'd work my fingers to the bone for you—I'd be contented and happy to follow you hungry and barefooted all over the world."

"No, I tell you—you went too far—it can never be!" he said.

"Have you no pity?—I have some

rights—see what you have done to me, Harry? You have changed me from a woman of high ideals to a creature of primitive passions. I have lost my reason—I know nothing but the instinct of one who has found her mate—I am just a clinging, loving savage.” He turned upon her with vehemence.

“You ask me what I have done to you?” he cried—“and what have you done to me? I am like a man saved from drowning and brought ashore only to be given poison by his rescuer, and you have filled my soul with poison, so whatever you are, whether a savage or not, I don’t care—for—you are nothing to me!”

“That isn’t true, Harry—I know I am—I must be! Hurry, Harry, and take me. No matter what happens I’ll never complain—I have had my lesson, Harry—I’ll be—a good—woman—” She had endured to the utmost of her being and now she fell prostrate at his feet, clutching at his shoes and shaking in a paroxysm of sobs and tears which rent her from head to foot.

For answer he bent swiftly, lifted her to his breast as he would a child and whispered:

“Betty—Betty—I can’t stand it!” And so she clung to him while he soothed and comforted her, but the next moment both listened in alarm at the sound of angry voices, gradually growing louder outside, and the quick stamp of onrushing feet. She slipped from his embrace, grasped his hat from the table and giving it to him, quickly forced him back into the closet again. She had barely time to turn the key in the lock and rush to her seat by the table when the voices outside had become a steady roar and the next instant the crowd had thundered across the veranda, burst open the door with a crash and poured into the room like a pack of bloodhounds sure of their quarry. They saw her sitting quietly by the table and there was an instant’s hush. Then Taylor swaggered forward and demanded of her roughly:

“Where the devil is he?”

“Yes, where is he?” the rest repeated savagely, shouting in unison. During

the silence which followed as she strove to master her voice, Choo slipped silently through the open door and stood in the rear unnoticed.

“He—he did not come!”

“But you rang the gong?” shouted Taylor in a rage.

“Yes—yes I know I did that, but—it was because I—I did not wish—to keep you all waiting—when—when it was not necessary,” she explained.

Snapshot Skinner and Burro Bill left the scowling crowd clustered about the doorway and walked to the other side of the room. Taylor in the meantime made his way heavily to the sideboard and helped himself to a drink. Burro Bill gave a backward jerk of his head in the direction of the white-faced girl sitting silently by the table and growled:

“Say, Snapshot, do yer allow as how that pizen-bred cayuse is a-grazin’ on some other claim ’bout now?”

“You are figgerin’ ’bout right, Bill,” he replied.

“Hell!” exploded Burro Bill, “this is *one* disappointment! So—this here round-up fer a entertainin’ rope-party is some unnecessary—likewise some premachoor?”

“Yep!”

“Well, damn my luck!” said Burro Bill softly between his gritted teeth, “an’ I had a chance t’ go with th’ Two-Bar outfit to-night an’ shoot up th’ Chinks on those placer claims in Boulder Valley!”

“Waal, we wuz suckers t’ wait fer him anyway,” snorted Snapshot in deep disgust. “Th’ only t’ do when yer want t’ stretch a lariat is t’ go git ’em—go git ’em! An’ say, Bill,” he leaned toward the small man at his side in a confidential manner, and speaking in a husky voice which cracked ludicrously in spite of his efforts to smother the loud tone: “I’m of opinion that th’ gal thar has been plumb locoed since her old man cashed in!”

“No?” cried Burro Bill, aghast.

“Yep!—had so much book-l’arnin’ that when she stacked up agin’ th’ real human life out here it made her dippy!”

"Too bad—too bad," said Burro Bill, shaking his head sorrowfully. "Say, yer don't reckon as how she's liable t' hev a loony spell right now, do yer?" casting an apprehensive gaze toward her.

"Oh, I don't know—yer kin do yer own guessin'. I can't make head nor tail t' this mixed-up deal, anyhow. Looks like somebody has shifted th' cut an' I passes this hand right here," decided Snapshot. He approached the table where Betty still sat with lowered eyes, and then his look traveled over to his faithful followers as though he took it for granted they would approve what he was about to say.

"We're all a heap sorry, miss, that yer ain't a-goin' t' see that maverick kick th' evenin' breezes black an' blue, but if yer think thar's any chance t' git him'n this State, we'll corral him certain sure!"

"Thank you," she said in a voice almost inaudible. This seemed to mark the close of the affair and there was a general movement toward the door, but here Burro Bill had an inspiration.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "mebbe—mebbe th' cuss'll come yet? We ain't sure he won't, an' if he does, an' we ain't here, we loses our fun. So what's th' matter with waitin' a spell fer him over at th' mine, hey?"

"I—I guess that would be better, if you are all willing to stay a little while longer," said Betty. It had flashed through her mind that it would be much safer for them to be together at some specified place than be scattered about indiscriminately, thereby making it extremely hazardous for Ogden to move in any direction, and so she was quick to indorse Burro Bill's suggestion. "Then if he does come," Betty continued, "I'll ring the gong again, just the same as I was to do in the first place." This was received with favor by all and again the new hope of a hilarious "rope-party" dispelled gloom and brought broad smiles of anticipative pleasure to all countenances.

During the colloquy between Snapshot and Burro Bill the glittering eyes of Choo had never left Taylor, who

twice made journeys to the sideboard to appease a thirst which seemed to be growing insatiable. Now Taylor stood with folded arms and lowered brows as the crowd passed through the door and made for the mine office. When the last one had gone Choo shut the door and again fastened his eyes on Taylor. There was absolute silence for a moment and then Betty turned with a gasp toward the closet in the corner.

CHAPTER XVI.

"What are you so scared about, Betty?" Taylor inquired, and laughed loudly. "You looked around as if you expected to see a ghost walk out of that closet." He was on his way to the sideboard again when she answered:

"I—I don't know as I—am scared—I'm only nervous over the—the whole thing," she said, rising and walking over toward the couch. "Oh, Choo," she added, on seeing him, "will you please get that rope—you remember that rope, don't you?—it is in the drawer of the center-table." He caught her meaning glance as he went by her and paused as Taylor, with bottle in hand, looked over to her and asked:

"Rope? What rope?"

"I had a rope for the purpose of tying—that man," she replied. "I wanted to make the capture—all alone."

"Oh, oh, yes, I see," he chuckled and poured out his drink, while over his face stole a sickly grin. The instant his back was turned Betty motioned for Choo to hurry and he opened the drawer of the table swiftly. He saw Ogden's hat as he drew forth the rope and he pointed one finger at it questioningly. In turn she pointed to the closet in the corner and Choo understood. The next instant, as if by magic, he whipped out his knife and shot its glistening blade into view. He made a swift, vicious stabbing gesture at Taylor, who still stood at the sideboard with his back turned, and looked to Betty with eyes which fairly pleaded for permission to spring upon Taylor and sink that keen, shining weapon in the unsuspecting man's back. As Betty

fully realized what Choo wanted to do she recoiled from him suddenly and a startled cry escaped her. At the sound Taylor wheeled—only to behold the passive Choo with a piece of rope in his hands which he was holding out to Betty.

"Yes, that is it," she said. Choo immediately walked to the front door, which he opened and then closed behind him. Taylor gazed at her as she went with the same old listless manner from the couch to the table and resumed her seat.

"Say—you're all to pieces, aren't you?" he demanded gruffly. "You make funny noises—you see funny things, and I guess the sooner we get away from this place and are married the better it will be for you." He walked unsteadily from the sideboard to where she sat. He did not notice her tense attitude and the desperate, hunted look in her eyes, but dropped heavily in the chair opposite her and smiled at her in a silly manner. "This is the first time I've had a chance to talk with you alone, Betty, since we've been engaged. You haven't been very attentive since you promised to be my wife, you know that, don't you?" he asked, attempting to take her hand which rested on the table near him. She drew it away with a quick jerk and the following flash of her angry eyes straightened him in his chair at once.

"No—never when you have been drinking," she said with rising wrath.

"Oh, very well—I guess I can wait," he said with an attempt at good nature. "You'll keep, all right—cold articles always keep good, anyway." He arose and looked down at her and she deliberately turned her face from him. "Say, Betty, now—now honestly—I'm never going to drink again after to-night, and I know that if this is the last time you'll overlook it, won't you?" She offered no reply and, after a shrug of his shoulders, he started for the sideboard, saying as he went, "All right—getting a little huffy, eh? Just the same—one good drink deserves another and—I can use the other." She watched him fearfully until he had

passed the closet on his way to the sideboard and then asked:

"It is getting late, Louis, and—don't you think you ought to go home?"

"Home?" he echoed, smacking his lips with satisfaction as he banged down the glass, "certainly not, decidedly not! Why such hurry, my dear? There's plenty of time. One can always go home and—my evening has just begun. Besides," he continued, walking back to her, "you are so anxious to speed the parting guest that I'm just a little suspicious. You don't act right to me, Betty. Are you hiding something from me?" She idly picked a stray thread from her black gown, held it up and then let it fall to the floor. Then she leaned on the table with her cheek resting against one hand and the other hand sought the table's surface to drum thereon indifferently. This refusal to notice his question made him impatient and then nettled.

"You needn't speak if you don't want to," he said heatedly, "but just the same you can afford to be decent."

"Judging from your conduct, you *can't* afford to be decent," she retorted.

"All right—go ahead and rap—knock away if it does you any good—because it don't hurt me, no, sir, not a bit! I said it's my last night and if you don't want to believe me you needn't, that's all."

"There is no need of my telling you how I feel toward you when you are drinking," she said contemptuously; "that you already know."

"Oh, come now, Betty, don't be too hard. It's my last night, honest! Going to forgive me, aren't you?" he asked.

"Of course—yes, yes—I forgive you," she replied impatiently, "but won't you please go home, Louis?" she insisted and then, turning to him slowly: "You—you are not afraid, are you?"

"Afraid? Afraid of what?" he asked, bristling all over.

"I mean—you—you have your revolver with you, haven't you?"

"To be sure I have—and it's a dandy—right here," he said with pride, slapping his hip, "and I have learned how

to use it since I've been out in this country." Again he arose and helped himself to a drink. As he returned from the sideboard she said with decision:

"You must go home now, Louis."

"Oh, pretty soon—pretty soon," with an airy wave of his hand. "Don't be so impatient. Anyway, I've got to tell you something before I go home. You see—we're about as good as married and this thing what I want to tell you has been on my mind and bothered me for several days—it hurts my conscience, too." He gazed at her for an instant, but if she was aware of his look she paid no attention to him. "I wonder—yes, I wonder," he resumed, "if you would forgive a fellow—if you would forgive me—no matter what I had done, as long as we are going to be married—would you?"

"No matter what you had done?" she repeated. "You have done nothing which needs my forgiveness, have you?"

"Have I?—well, I should say I had done something which needs your forgiveness! Here I am again, with my tongue running away with me, but I can't help it and I must have another drink before I can tell you." She watched him with increasing interest as he made the journey to the sideboard and poured the liquor with a hand which shook. This time the drink was larger than any of the others had been and it disappeared at one gulp. He had returned to his chair and made several noticeable, but unsuccessful, efforts to speak before she asked:

"What have you to tell me?"

"I'll tell you if you forgive me—understand? If you'll forgive me—no matter what it is—now, don't forget!—no matter what it is—I'll tell you, but I won't unless you do!" he said doggedly.

"Yes, yes—I'll forgive you, but do hurry—you must go home," she cried, fast losing control of herself.

"Oh, I'll tell—I'll tell, but first you've got to swear—un'ersthand," he shouted thickly, "you've got to swear 'fore I tell you?"

"Very well, I swear," she said, more to humor him.

"'Nother drink first—I need courage." His course to and from the sideboard was growing more and more unsteady with each trip and this time there was a pronounced stagger as he returned and half fell into his seat. "Now I'm goin' tell you shom'thin' you don't shuspect—shom'thin' you'd never guessh," he blurted out, nodding his head sagely at her. He halted to better master his tongue and then declared quite easily:

"Your father was not murdered—his death was'n accident!"

As he calmly made this announcement she was really giving but small heed to his talk, believing that what he was going to tell her would only be something of fancied importance, or else the irresponsible, rambling conversation which is often the fruit of a maudlin condition—but now as his words went home to her alert brain she stiffened and partly raised from her chair, and upon him she fastened a penetrating gaze which held his eyes whether he would or no.

"What are you trying to tell me?" she said menacingly. "Say that again—I want to be sure of it!" Her change of manner stirred him and he replied with an ugly leer:

"Ah, your father's death was'n accident—can't you hear?"

"Yes, I hear, and I know what you are saying—but *you* don't!" She noted a queer, crafty smile flit across his face and disappear, and she added in a soft, purring tone: "Louis, you are hardly yourself!"

"No, that's right, too," he agreed with a blustering laugh, "but just shame," he went on vehemently, "I know I'm pretty full all right, my dear, but yours truly comes mighty near knowing what he's shayin', an' I'm telling truth—hear me?—truth!" and to better emphasize his statement he brought a heavy fist down on the table several times.

"How was his death an accident? I will listen if you will hurry." She was outwardly very calm, ominously calm,

"Was'n accident 'cause he was taken for shom'boday elsh—shot by mishtake—thash how."

"By mistake! Whose mistake?" Then she paused an instant and questioned him again. "Then *why* was he robbed?"

"Oh, thash all bluff—you know what a bluff is, eh?" with a knowing laugh. "Yes, just a bluff to 'vert shuspicion. Man who did it—by mishtake—was scared—dammit!—scared t' death! Shay, wouldn't you've been scared if you did it? Shay, wouldn't you?"

"The man who did it? Who was he?" she asked in a horrified voice.

Taylor stood upon his feet with an effort and then, after gaining a good balance, half stumbled and half walked to the sideboard, where he managed to pour another drink, but not without spilling much of the liquor on the floor. Once more he returned to her side and looked down at her, meanwhile grasping the chair-back for support.

"Who was man, eh?" he repeated. "Hah!—you thought was horsh-thief, didn't you? Naw-w-w—he didn't know thing 'bout it—an' you want find out who did it, eh? Well, guessh I shaid 'nuff. I'll let you guessh," and he broke into a high, gleeful laugh. "Shay, Betty," he continued, when he had checked his bubbling mirth, "thash damn good joke'n you, all right, all right—you waitin' for horsh-thief t' come back'n get hung, an' he's—he's shix thoushand miles 'way—ha, ha, hah!" He stopped to hold a hand to his aching side and then asked with new cunning:

"Nozzer shing I want know—why—why was he comin' back here'n whash he comin' for, hey?" While he had been mouthing and stammering through his drunken explanation she had covered her face with her hands and now she could only keep repeating:

"It was *you*—it was *you*!" When she had ceased saying this a convulsive sob escaped her and her eyes swam in tears.

"There you go—there you go!" he cried in a voice which was almost a snarl. "I knew it! Quit your sniv-

elin', will you? Ish all right—ish all right, I tell you—can't be helped now—an'—an' you swore you'd forgive me—no matter whash I did—you know you did—so lesh bind bargain, Betty—we'll kish, yes, kish an' forgive, eh?"

When she paid no attention to his request he repeated it and then reached out one hand and grasped her wrist. At the touch of his hand she shrank back quickly and he lost his balance and fell upon the table. He recovered himself, though, caught her arm before she could rise, and roughly pulled her to him around the table. Then she fought to get free, saying nothing but struggling with every bit of her strength. For a full moment they fought back and forth across the room in silence and finally he spoke, his voice coming and going in wheezing gasps:

"Little cranky, ain't you? Ain't you mine—mine body and soul? You may be—'n icicle—but—I'll do—shome thaw-in'! I've kept m' hands off'n you long 'nuff!"

Then fear lent additional strength to her struggles and with a mighty effort she broke from his embrace and gave him a shove which sent him staggering back on his heels, knocking a chair spinning and overturning it with a crash. She ran for the door but he headed her off and, again circling her with his arms, drew her to him. By this time he was thoroughly crazed—the limitless insanity of a man whose passions were inflamed by liquor and increased by the final explosion of bestial desires long smoldering under pressure. She knew it—she could see the madness of the man in his look, in his hot, panting breath and in the brutal force which he was exerting to overcome her. Then she fought as one with a brave heart fights for life. Her long, muscular fingers gripped his hair and she pulled and tugged until he cursed her. She clawed his face like a wildcat, her furious, digging nails leaving red streaks to show the vigor of her defense, and all the while neither spoke except when he could get his breath long enough to threaten and swear at her.

Finally, he pinned her to the wall and got one arm around her neck with his fingers under her chin—then he gave vent to a frightful oath as her teeth fastened to his hand and bit to the bone with the strength and ferocity of a bull-terrier. He wrenched his hand away and struck her across the face, but though the cruel blow sent her reeling she made no outcry. She did not retreat now, but met him half way as he came at her—her eyes blazing above the crimson welt which marked his cowardice. For the first time he had to defend himself from her furious onslaught—she was now the aggressor!

She swung her arms against him like two flails, again scratching, and twice managing to sink her teeth deep in his hands. Then she struck out blindly with her feet, kicking and slashing with the strength of a frightened mule. He was now having a hard time keeping away from her—*she had him fairly beat!* He backed farther away to escape her deadly feet and hands and, noting his retreat, once more she turned to rush to the front door. As she did so her foot caught in a rug on the floor and she tripped and fell against the table. Before she could right herself he had thrown himself upon her and had her against the table—helpless—with her arms pinioned at her side. Even then she did not beg nor implore, and it was not until his gloating, evil-smelling face slowly pressed against her own, and she knew that his loathsome caress was inevitable, that she threw back her head as far as she could and gave one long, terrifying scream.

CHAPTER XVII.

Taylor paused—then let her up. From the closet in the corner had come a heavy, banging noise against the door. Again the sound of a heavy blow against the closet door! A piece of wood flew from the door half way across the room and then the blows doubled. Taylor held her with one hand and with the other reached around and drew his revolver. She tried to grasp the hand holding the revolver, but he was cooler

now and prevented this. All the while the blows increased in volume and came faster and faster against the door. The splinters were flying in showers. Then she screamed:

"Harry!—look out!—my God!—look out! he's going to shoot!" She had no more than said it when Ogden burst what was left of the door from its hinges and plunged forward into the room. He steadied himself and turned as Taylor took careful aim and fired—then straightened up on his toes and fell forward on his face where he lay still, very still!

Taylor half twisted around to the girl beside him with a short laugh. She looked as one suddenly stricken unto death, but she stood upon her feet without wavering. Taylor seemed to have become sober all in a second.

"So—that was it—was it?" he asked. "That's why you didn't scream before? I wondered why you kept so still and I——" He stopped talking and watched her walk to where Ogden lay and kneel beside him with an agonized moan. She pressed her handkerchief to the crimson splotch, now gradually growing wider, on his forehead, then partly turned him over so she could listen at his breast for a moment. When she finally arose she walked up close to Taylor and said in a lifeless voice:

"You have completed your work—now go home!" He never moved—held by the unspeakable pathos in her face. "Why hesitate?" she asked. "Can it be you are not satisfied?" Then his rage returned.

"Satisfied? *Me* satisfied?" he cried. "Pah!—I shall be when you marry me—not before! After this—after what has been going on—if I am willing to overlook it—I guess *you'll* have no objection!"

"So you think that, do you?" she said. "And knowing that to be so, you would still be willing to marry me, would you?" She turned and glanced toward the front door. Divining her thoughts he immediately walked to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"No, you don't!" he said with an-

other laugh. "Oh, yes—I'll marry you—I'm willing to marry you—in spite of all!"

"By what strange freak of nature were you cast in the Breckenridge mold, I wonder?" she asked with a scorn which scorched him. "It is—incomprehensible that our blood should breed such a—such a—mongrel!"

Both started as a moan came from the man on the floor. Taylor walked carelessly to where Ogden lay and looked down at him.

"Yes, I see," he said, "the job was not quite finished—a little bit too high—it glanced off. Well," he asked, returning to where she stood, "did you ever see a man look death in the face and then die? It will be a rare experience—much more instructive than a mere hanging!"

"What would you do?" she breathed.

"Do?" he repeated, "what else is there for me to do? Wait and see! There is a price on his head. You know the justice of this country and how much mercy there is here for an escaped prisoner? Besides, he is a thief and, in the eyes of the law, a murderer!"

"*You*—are the murderer!" she cried, facing him with clenched hands.

"Oh, no more of that," he said, "the drama is over and we might just as well make up our minds to live—happy ever after, as the story-books say."

Ogden groaned weakly and moved. They watched the wounded man feebly work the fingers of one hand as he tried to raise an arm. Neither noticed Choo appear silently at one of the front windows and look in. His fleeting glance took in Betty and Taylor, and the man on the floor. Then he dodged from sight.

"Are you any kind of a man—man enough to give him a chance—a chance to fight for his life," she implored, "a chance to fight for me?"

"That's pretty good," he snarled, "a chance to fight for you, eh?"

"Are you trying to torture me, Louis?" she asked piteously. "Surely—you are not bent on committing this—awful murder?"

"He dies right here—now—just as sure as there is a day and a night!"

Then she was certain he meant it. She raised her eyes heavenward as though making a mute appeal to the Almighty for help in the moment of her great travail and then lowered them—only to hold her gaze fastened on the front window an instant. What she saw there was Choo slowly, slowly raising the sash. Then she turned to Taylor and spoke:

"Think again, Louis!" she warned him. "I want you to weigh carefully every word! Perhaps—perhaps your own life depends upon it! Is it—is it your—final—decision?"

"Yes, I tell you—do you hear me? Yes!"

"Very well," she said quietly, "so be it!"

Ogden sat up and gazed around him vacantly. Taylor again drew his revolver and went a step nearer. Then he took deliberate aim as Ogden got to his knees and stood dizzily upon his feet. He measured the half-conscious man with the eye of a sharpshooter, slowly began to press the hair-trigger and then—she was upon him with the fury of a wounded lioness. With his free hand he tried to stave her off and—ah!—he felt a sharp, stinging sensation in his throat and something warm gushed from his neck and wet his breast. Again he felt the same pain, but this time in his chest. Now it traveled to his side—now to his arm—now at his back, and, following each excruciating sting, came a flood of something which welled over him and ran down his body in streams. The light disappeared, the sound of a thousand church-bells crashed in his ears and he made one despairing effort to shriek aloud, but the effort was hushed in a strangled gurgle and—he knew no more!

"Choo!—Choo!" she screamed, "stop!—oh, won't you stop?—you're hacking him to pieces!" and the arm which had been rising and falling above Taylor's body ceased its relentless plunging against the quivering flesh. He arose and sprung the reeking blade of his knife back into the handle. Then he

gazed down at the body of the man he had slit and gashed so mercilessly, with his face as expressionless as a stone.

Ogden stood with his arm around her, his brain clearing rapidly, and the throbbing and the numbness in his head gradually receding.

"Ah, you know me now, Harry, don't you?" she cried. "I'm Betty—your Betty, Harry!" she sobbed.

"Yes, of course I know you, Betty," he said weakly, "but I—I can hardly collect my thoughts. Are you safe, Betty?"

"Of course, foolish boy," she cried happily, "am I not with you? Wait just a moment, Harry!" Leaving his side she ran to the sideboard and returned with a napkin which she tied around his head. "There," she said, "the wound is only slight and I can dress it easily as soon as we are on the train. Now come, boy, we must hurry!" She approached Choo, who was still looking down at the body of Taylor. "I shall thank you every day of my life, Choo," she said simply.

"It has been a horrible experience for all of us," said Ogden.

"My dear, never mind now," she said. "The world is before us and there is plenty of time to forget. The only thing now is to get away from here as soon as possible." She looked at her watch and added: "We can just make the train going west if we hurry. The horses are waiting at the corral and—what about you, Choo?"

"I—I shall stay," he answered without emotion. "They will not hurt me."

"Then it is time to say good-by," she said and her eyes filled with tears. She held out her hand. "Or is it to be *au revoir*?" she asked.

"No," he said quietly, "it is—good-by, but who can tell what is beyond?" He turned away, ignoring Ogden's outstretched hand—and thus they left him.

When he was sure they had gone, Choo went to the open door and gazed in the direction they had taken. With the last sound of their galloping horses along the trail he stepped back into the room and shut the door. From the

couch he drew off the cover and spread it over Taylor's body so that it was completely hidden from view. Then he sat by the table and murmured, as though more to himself:

"She has found happiness. She said the world was before her. My *world* is behind me. She will have time to forget. I shall remember now and—in what comes after! Well, as Sanford used to say in New Haven: 'It's all in the game, Choo!' They will find this man's body when they come—they will want to kill all the more. I will try to satisfy them!"

He made his way to the kitchen and returned with a box which looked like the large boxes in which firecrackers are packed. From this he took a suit of silk garments which he put on and over these he slipped a glistening silk blouse which was worked beautifully in gold. On his finger he put the huge, priceless ruby of his ancestors. Once he raised one hand to his forehead with a weary gesture, disclosing beneath the heavy silken jacket that mystic emblem which in a moment could send a million people of the Chinese Empire groveling at his feet—the insignia of his blood and rank.

"It will take half an hour," he said musingly, "before these—these Christian dogs"—he fairly hissed the word—"are through—with me, and then she will be—safe—on the train—with—him!"

He sauntered leisurely over to the gong, looked curiously at the wire hanging down, grasped it and sent three loud strokes resounding through the night.

"I guess the dogs will hear that," he said, and returned to his seat. "It was harder for me to live as a servant," he continued, "than it is to die like a prince. Well, they are coming now—in full cry!" From beneath his royal jacket he drew a box of cigarettes and lit one. Outside there arose the muffled roar of many angry voices and the sound grew louder.

"Here they come!" he said with a smile.

No Wedding Bells

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "A New Relation," "The Mother Lode," Etc.

"There's no fool like an old fool"—and the skipper of the *Jennie Wilks* does some fool things by way of confirming the old saying. Written as it is in Chisholm's most humorous vein, this story is certain to bring the laughs.



CAPTAIN Noah Predie of the schooner *Jennie Wilks* made his way down the dark main street of Westport in the direction of the dock where lay his vessel. It was late and few lights showed. Captain Predie appeared to be in deep thought; at intervals he paused, stared at the ground and muttered to himself; then he shook his head helplessly and resumed his way.

The *Jennie Wilks* was in darkness, save for a glowing point on her after-deck, which waxed and waned. This point, upon the captain's approach, resolved itself into a newly filled pipe in the mouth of his mate, Tom Martin.

"You're up late," said the skipper.

"It's too hot to sleep," replied the mate; "and besides, I thought I saw some one dodging about on the wharf a while ago, up to no good, I'll bet. I thought best to stay on deck."

Captain Predie peered nervously into the darkness from which he had come. "What did it look like?" he asked.

"I couldn't see," replied the mate. "Just a dark form."

"It didn't look like a woman, did it?" inquired the skipper.

"Woman!" ejaculated the mate in astonishment. "Well, now you mention it, it might have been," he said slowly,

endeavoring to make out his superior's features in the gloom. "Yes, I almost think it was. How did you know?"

"I didn't know," said the skipper hastily. "I just asked. There's as many women as men in the world."

"More," said the mate briefly. "I hope she ain't trying to drown herself."

"Drown herself!" exclaimed Captain Predie, startled. "No. Why should she?"

"They do drown themselves sometimes," said Martin slowly. "But of course if you don't know of any reason for it, I don't."

Captain Predie with some heat denied all knowledge of reasons for suicidal intent on the part of any female. He took a few turns about the deck and then abruptly invited the mate below for a nightcap, an invitation which was accepted with great alacrity.

The two men imbibed their drinks slowly, without speech. The captain's manner was preoccupied; his eyes were fixed on the table in front of him and he beat a tattoo upon it with the fingers of the hand not occupied with his glass. The mate, out of a long experience of his superior officer, waited until it should please him to speak. At length the skipper sighed heavily and cleared his throat; the mate came to attention.

"Tom," said the skipper in sepulchral tones, "I'm in trouble!"

"Are you?" said the mate, endeavoring to infuse a proper amount of sympathy into his voice.

"In serious trouble," asserted the skipper. "I've got myself into a mess, quite innocent, and how to get out of it I don't know. Between ourselves, there's a woman wants to marry me."

"No!" cried the mate in most uncomplimentary astonishment. "You're joking!"

"It's a fact," said the skipper solemnly.

"Poor thing," said the mate. "I mean," he added hastily, catching the skipper's eye, "I congratulate you, of course."

"No need to," said the other gloomily. "It ain't a subject for congratulations. I don't want to be married, and if I did I wouldn't want to be married to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" ejaculated the startled mate.

"To-morrow," repeated the captain sadly.

The mate's comment was a single word, and the skipper nodded agreement.

"It certainly is," he said. "It was as big a surprise to me when she named the day as it is to you. It was a shock; you could have knocked me down with a feather."

He sighed heavily and poured himself a stiff nor'wester as a reviver. The mate, saying that it was a shock to him also, did likewise, and they surveyed each other gloomily above their respective glasses.

"It's none of my business," said the mate, "but how does it come that you are going to be married if you don't want to be? I always thought this was a free country. A man can't be taken and married unless he wants to."

"It's all along of my tender heart and easy nature," said the skipper in a tone that suggested profound self-pity. "I say things I don't mean when a woman seems to expect 'em, rather than disappoint her. I shouldn't be took serious that way, and them that knows me don't. If every woman I've said soft things to had took them serious, Lord!

there's no telling how often I'd have been married." He shook his head over the possibilities held by the past.

"Did you ask this one to marry you?" queried the mate. "What's her name?"

"Her name is Andrews, and she led me on to ask her," said the skipper in an injured tone. "She deceived me into thinking she wouldn't accept me if I offered, and then snapped me up afore I had time to come about, or even wear ship. Let it be a lesson to you, Tom. Never trust a woman. What I'm to do I don't know."

"You mean about wedding clothes and such," said the mate with a grin. "I wouldn't worry about that. And I'll be proud to stand up with you, if you haven't got any one else."

The skipper's reception of this friendly offer was needlessly profane. "I'm not going to be married," he said emphatically. "Would I tell you all this if I was? I want you to think of some way for me to get out of it."

"Tell her you're married already," suggested the mate.

"And have her sue me for damages, I s'pose," said the skipper, with scorn.

"You might fall overboard," said the resourceful mate. "It's a dark night and nobody about to hear you."

"I swam ten miles once in my clothes on a bet," said the skipper. "Nobody'd believe I was drowned."

"But I'd say you were blind drunk when you came aboard," said the mate. "I'd make a natural story of it."

"I'd have to come to life again, wouldn't I?" said the skipper impatiently. "It won't do."

"Well," said the mate, his inventive genius failing, "I can't think of anything else unless you throw fits and froth at the mouth. I've heard of it being done with shaving-soap. You might have a fit when you're on the way to church, or standing up before the minister."

"It's too risky," said the skipper. "She might marry me anyway. No. What I'll do will be to be sick in bed till we sail. A man can't be married against his will when he's not able to stand up. That's what I'll do. And

once we get to sea I'll have time to think and room to do it in."

In the morning Captain Predie and Martin discussed the matter again over their after-breakfast pipes.

"The ceremony was for four o'clock in the afternoon," said the former, "and I was to call for her at half-past three. You'll have to go, Tom, and tell her how ill I am."

"I s'pose so," said the mate, without enthusiasm.

"Put it strong," said the skipper. "Tell her it's serious, and say any excitement would be fatal to me."

"What do you want me to say you've got?" asked the mate.

"Whatever you think best," said the skipper generously. "I trust a lot to your judgment, Tom. I know your talents."

The mate looked hard at the captain, but the latter's countenance revealed nothing behind the words.

"I wonder what sort of a looker she is?" he said to himself as he turned in at the Andrews' gate. "She must be a queer fish to marry Predie at all, let alone the day after he proposed. Old maid, likely. Maybe she'll have hysterics, or faint, or something. I wish I had let him get out of it himself. That's the worst with me; I'm too ready to oblige people."

He rang the bell, prepared to meet almost anything in the way of unprepossessing femininity, and therefore his surprise was the greater when the door was opened by a decidedly good-looking young woman behind whose sparkling black eyes a demon of mischief lurked half-hidden.

"Great Scott!" inwardly exclaimed the mate. "This is a tidy little craft. Wonder who she is?" Aloud he said: "Good day. Does Miss Andrews live here?"

"I am Miss Andrews," said the young lady.

"My name is Martin," said the mate. "I'm mate of the *Jennie Wilks*. I guess probably it's your aunt I want to see."

"I haven't any aunt," said the young lady. "Is it about Captain Predie?"

"Yes," said the wondering Martin. Surely this pretty girl could not be old Predie's fiancée. "Maybe you have an older sister, though?"

"I haven't," said Miss Andrews. "I'm the person you're looking for. Won't you come in?"

The amazed mate followed her into the house and there sat twirling his hat in a pair of huge hands, uncertain how to begin. The mischievous eyes threatened to make his task a hard one. He was quite ready to lie himself black in the face for his superior officer, but he wished the young woman were not so good-looking. Why in thunder didn't old Predie marry her when he had the chance? For his own part he would have jumped at it. It struck him as odd that he could see no preparations for a wedding in her attire, and her manner was certainly cool.

"Well?" said Miss Andrews, after a long pause.

"Well," echoed the embarrassed mate, "I'm afraid I have some bad news for you; something that will upset your plans a little."

"About Captain Predie?" asked the young lady calmly.

"Yes," said Martin. "The fact is, he isn't well enough to be married to-day."

"What's the matter with him?" demanded Miss Andrews without perceptible emotion.

"I—I don't just know," answered Martin with hesitation. "It seems to be a complication." He decided that the calm young lady could bear a shock. "We're afraid it's serious. He's a very sick man."

"It must have been very sudden," said Miss Andrews skeptically. "He was quite well yesterday."

"It hit him all of a heap," said the mate, beginning to rise to the occasion. "He came aboard last night complaining of dizziness, and pains in his head and back and heart. He found it hard to breathe, too. In half an hour he was flat on his back."

"Dear me!" said the sick man's betrothed.

"He went clean out of his head and raved," pursued the mate, now well into his stride. "Talked of being married to-day and all the wrecks he's been in, and was violent. Toward morning he became unconscious. His head is red-hot to touch."

"Poor man!" said the young lady, but there was little sympathy in her tone.

"His pulse is jumpy and flutters like a crippled bird," said the mate indignantly, for the young lady's unruffled calm appeared to reflect upon his descriptive powers. "Sometimes he cramps into a hard knot and his agony is awful; he almost screams with the pain of it. His face is like a corpse and there is froth on his lips. He has these fits frequent. It unmans me to watch him, and even the toughest of the hands sheds tears. Any one would who had a heart."

He paused and cast a meaning glance at Miss Andrews.

"What doctor is attending him?" she asked, unmoved.

"What—what doctor?" stammered Martin.

"Yes, what doctor? I'd like to hear what he has to say about it."

"Well," said the embarrassed mate, "we haven't got a doctor yet. He's a Christian Scientist and wouldn't have one," he added in a flash of inspiration.

"Not even when he was unconscious, I suppose," said the young lady, with sarcasm.

"It didn't last," said the mate manfully. "He came to again at once. He ordered me not to let a doctor come aboard, and of course I couldn't disobey him. It would be as much as my berth is worth."

"If he won't have a doctor he ought to have a nurse," said Miss Andrews.

"He gets the best of nursing," said Martin. "I sat on him myself half the night holding him down, and two of the hands sat on him the other half. His strength was wonderful. But he's weak to-day; no more power than an infant, except in spasms. Then he'd almost break a hawser."

"I'm going to nurse him myself," said Miss Andrews.

"What!" cried the startled mate. "You couldn't. You haven't the strength."

"Then I'd get you to help me," said the volunteer nurse with determination.

"It—it wouldn't be proper," said the mate. "There's no women aboard, and the hands are a rough lot."

"I'll get my brother to come with me," said the lady. "I'm going, and that settles it. You wait here till I get ready."

Heedless of protests from Martin she left the room, and in five minutes returned dressed for the street and accompanied by a broad-shouldered young man with a pugnacious jaw and a trick of carrying his arms elbows out, the back of his half-clenched hands to the front, which gave him a very truculent aspect. Him she introduced as her brother Robert.

Mr. Robert Andrews caught Martin's extended hand in a viselike grip, and the latter being unprepared for this ingenious form of assault felt his finger-bones crack as the young man crushed them together.

"Glad to meet you," said Andrews, releasing his victim, who growled an acknowledgment, furtively stretching his aching hand.

They set off for the schooner, Miss Andrews in the lead followed by the two young men, who glanced sidewise at each other much after the manner of two strange dogs.

"Predie's sick, Angel says," remarked young Mr. Andrews.

"Angel?" queried the puzzled mate.

"Her," said Mr. Andrews briefly, with a nod toward his sister.

"Oh!" said the mate, enlightened. Angel seemed a nice name. "Yes, he's very sick. It's not right for Miss Andrews to nurse him."

"Why isn't it?" asked her brother.

"He may have something catching," said the mate. "His symptoms point to yellow fever, but they may be only smallpox."

"What are they like?" demanded

Mr. Andrews. "Any snakes or pink rats with 'em?"

"No, there's not," said the mate indignantly. "He's a mighty sick man, I tell you. Don't you go throwing out any slurs on him to me."

"Aw, forget it!" growled the other, and they tramped on in grim silence, the mate cudgeling his brain vainly for some way out of the difficulty.

None presented itself, and when they reached the *Jennie Wilks* he firmly refused to allow them to go below until he had seen the sick man. Leaving them on deck he dived down the companion and entered the captain's state-room with some misgivings.

Captain Predie reclined at ease in an armchair. A vivid suit of pajamas clothed his manly form, and a seasoned pipe was clenched between his teeth. A glass and bottle beside him formed a barrier against worldly cares. He greeted his mate with cordiality.

"How'd you make it?" he asked.

"I didn't make it," said the mate, without any effort to soften the ill tidings. "She's here to nurse you."

"Wh-a-at!" gasped the skipper in horror. "You don't mean——" His words trailed off in an inarticulate choking sound.

The mate nodded. "On deck with her brother," he said. "I made 'em stay there till I could tell you."

The skipper's expressed opinion of his mate's diplomatic attainments left little to the imagination.

"Use your own head from now out," snapped the deeply injured mate, and turned on his heel. As he did so footsteps and the swish of skirts sounded from the saloon.

"Lock the door!" gasped the skipper. "I apologize, Tom. They mustn't come in!" He plunged into his bunk and drew the covers over him. "Tell them to go away."

The voice of Miss Andrews demanded admission.

"You can't come in yet," said the mate. "Go and sit down and wait. Don't make a noise. He's very low."

"Tell her she can't come in at all," whispered the skipper hoarsely.

"I'll give you five minutes," said the voice of Miss Andrews, "and then if you don't open the door I'll have my brother break it in."

"I'd like to see him try it," growled the mate beneath his breath.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Captain Predie. "She'll do it, too, Tom. I've got to do the best I can or she'll marry me after all. There's a pot of white paint on the shelf; get it and swab it on my face and chest in patches. And take that there bottle of iodine and paint in between the white. Step lively!"

In five minutes the ruddy countenance of the skipper resembled that of an Australian aborigine adorned for war. He inspected the result in a mirror and added a few finishing touches.

"It ought to do," he said, contemplating with satisfaction the reflection of a ghastly smile. "Just cut a small-sized chew off that soap in the shaving-mug and give it to me in my hand so I can foam up if needful. Had I better be unconscious or out of my head when she comes in, Tom?"

"I'd talk foolish, if I were you," said the mate. "It'll be easy for you."

The skipper was too perturbed to retort. "Show her in," he said with resignation, sinking back on his pillow.

"If she wants to send for a doctor don't you do it," said the mate. "I said you were a Christian Scientist." He closed the door upon the skipper's pointed reference to all scientists, Christian or otherwise.

Miss Andrews and her brother rose as he entered the saloon.

"How is he?" asked the former.

"I don't like his looks," said the mate truthfully.

And when she entered the sick-room neither apparently did Miss Andrews. But the mate was in doubt as to the nature of her suppressed emotion. She bent over the bunk and studied the frescoed features of her betrothed.

"What horrible stuff has he got on his face?" she asked.

"He's breaking out in patches," returned Martin. "It may be 'most anything. It looks to me like the plague."

"Looks like whitewash to me," com-

mented Mr. Robert Andrews. "Is he asleep, or what?"

"For'ard there!" roared the skipper in sudden delirium; "keep your eyes peeled, or by the holy taffrail I'll make you wish you had. Keep her straight, Stornsen, and let her walk."

"He thinks he's on deck on a dark night," said the mate. "I believe your presence excites him."

"How can it do that if he doesn't know me?" said Miss Andrews.

"He seems to feel it," said the mate. "Better come away."

"It's my duty to stay with him," she replied.

"It isn't mine," said her brother. "I'm going out to smoke a pipe. See you later."

"This is very hard on you," said the mate when they were alone with the sick man. "You have my sympathy."

Miss Andrews raised her eyes to his face. The mate thought he had never seen prettier ones. She bore up astonishingly, all things considered.

"Thank you," she said. "If the worst happens I know I can count on your help."

"You can," said the mate fervently. "I'd be only too happy."

"Hard a-port!" cried the skipper. "Down with your hellum! Jam her down, you square-headed son of an Amsterdammer!"

His prospective bride contemplated him as he tossed violently in his bunk. "He's quite unconscious and can't be suffering," she said. "I don't suppose he'll get over it. Has he a good constitution, do you think?"

"Not what it was," said the mate.

"Of course, he's nearly old enough to be my father," said the young lady. "Naturally, he's not as strong as a younger man. Perhaps you wonder why I consented to marry him?"

The mate, furtively eying the clenching fists of the sick man, confessed to a pardonable curiosity.

"I wonder at it myself when I look at him," continued Miss Andrews. "You wouldn't call him handsome, would you?"

"Not—not exactly," said the mate with hesitation.

"Nor good-tempered?" said Miss Andrews.

"He has a temper, I'll admit," replied Martin.

The unconscious man muttered something that sounded like smothered profanity, coupled with his mate's name.

"Nor choice in his language?" said Miss Andrews.

"Depends on what you call choice," said the mate, eying the prostrate form with some resentment. The lady accepted the qualification.

"So that he isn't a man you'd think a girl would care for," she continued. "Still, he's very fond of me. Old men are so foolish that way. Perhaps you'd like to read a few letters he wrote me. I always carry them. They may seem silly to you. I'll show them to you after he has gone."

"I'd like to see them now," said the mate, whose trained ear had accurately interpreted the last remarks of the skipper and found them offensive in the extreme.

"Well," said Miss Andrews hesitatingly, "I don't know why you shouldn't."

The sick man opened his eyes and groaned.

"Angel!" he said feebly. "Is this a dream? What has happened? Ain't I dead yet?"

"Not yet," said his fiancée calmly. "We have many happy years before us, Noah darling."

The captain shook his head.

"I'm going," he said. "I can feel it. Good-by, Angel. Take her away, Tom. It will be too much for her."

"I'm not going," said Angel. "Send for a doctor at once, Mr. Martin."

"No!" cried the skipper in a voice of surprising strength. "I won't have a doctor. They're frauds. I don't believe in 'em."

"Nonsense! You're going to have one," said Angel.

"I tell you I won't," cried the skipper. "I'm not sick; I only think I'm sick, and if I die I only think I'm dead."

There ain't no such thing anyway. Go away and let me think I'm well!"

"You'll do your thinking with me to look after you," said Angel with determination. "Do you think you'll last for a few hours?"

"I may pass away any minute," said the skipper firmly.

"You'd better make your will," said Miss Andrews. "Of course you'll leave your money to me, Noah."

"There ain't much to leave," said the skipper.

"I'll take what there is," said the lady. "I'll have to go into mourning, and there will be your funeral expenses to pay. Would you wish an expensive casket, or just a plain one?"

"I'll be buried at sea," said the skipper. "Sewed up with a pig of ballast at my feet and slid over the rail, same as a lot of better men. You'll see to that, Tom?"

"Glad to," returned the mate, where-at the captain eyed him malignantly.

"You'd better have a plot in the cemetery," said his fiancée. "And I can come and plant flowers in the spring, and sit there with my sewing or a book on summer afternoons. I'd like it so much. You can't refuse me a little thing like that."

The unadorned portions of the skipper's face grew purple, but he restrained himself with an effort. "Have it your own way," he said. "It won't matter to me."

"That's sweet of you," said Angel. "I'll pick out a nice, shady, cool spot. It will be a comfort to you to think of it."

The skipper groaned and rolled his eyes.

"I can't breathe!" he said hoarsely.

"You need a mustard-plaster," said Miss Andrews. "Mr. Martin, see if you can get a tin of mustard and a little flour. I won't need much flour, though."

In spite of the skipper's protests his chest was covered with a plaster of heroic proportions, which shortly began to bite. Leaving Miss Andrews to look after him, the mate went on deck,

where he found Mr. Robert Andrews smoking and scowling at the bay.

"Well?" he said as the mate approached.

"Well?" said the latter without cordiality.

Mr. Andrews eyed him askance. "What have you got Predie all painted up for?" he demanded. "He's no more sick than I am."

"Isn't he?" said the mate.

"No, he's not," said Mr. Andrews truculently. "What the devil do you mean by it?"

The mate whirled on him. "Look here," he said. "You keep a civil tongue in your head, or I'll teach you manners, young fellow!"

Mr. Andrews grinned broadly and stretched himself.

"Will you do it here, or around behind that lumber pile?" he asked.

The mate looked about. He strongly desired to knock Angel's brother into the middle of next week, and his right hand still tingled with the young man's grip, but it would not do to fight on deck. The lumber pile, however, seemed to offer concealment.

"I'll go you," he said, "for five minutes by the watch. It's all the time I can spare, and likely all you'll want."

Meantime, in the cabin, the skipper was writhing beneath a particularly large and strong mustard-plaster, and protesting against it.

"Let me die in peace," he growled. "This here thing is biting inches deep into my chest. It feels like fire. Take it off!"

"You only think it burns," said his nurse. "It will do you good. You really ought to have one on your back, too. Don't you feel better already? Your voice sounds stronger."

"I do feel better, I think," said the captain, appalled at the possibility of the application of another plaster in a fresh spot.

"Well enough to be married?" asked Miss Andrews. "We can send for a clergyman, you know. Wouldn't it be romantic to be married aboard ship?"

"I feel worse," groaned the captain

hastily. "I'm burning up. Go away. Do you want to see me die before your eyes? I believe you do."

"I never saw anybody die," said Angel reflectively. "How does it feel? I think you must be very brave to face it the way you do."

"You've no heart for my sufferings," cried the skipper. "You'd see me die and never shed a tear."

"What good would it do?" asked Angel practically. "Wouldn't you like to wash that stuff off your face? You do look so funny!"

"Funny!" gasped the outraged captain.

Swiftly he inserted the little cube of shaving-soap in his mouth and champed upon it. The taste of the soap aided him to produce a facial expression horrible in the extreme. The soap lathered beautifully between the captain's molars and foam began to appear at the corners of his mouth. He threshed about with clutching hands and rolling eyes, expecting to see Angel rise and flee in terror from the sight. Alas! She sat watching him with perfect composure. His contortions slowly ceased and he lay still, very much out of breath from their violence.

"Quite through?" asked Angel.

The captain gulped—and swallowed the remainder of the soap. His insulted stomach rose up in rebellion, but by an effort he controlled his external emotions.

"Because if you are," said the young lady, "I want to talk to you."

With a wave of his hand, for obvious prudential reasons not daring to attempt speech, the captain signified his willingness to listen.

"In the first place," said Angel, "I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth."

Hardly able to believe his ears, the captain turned a fishy eye upon her.

"You asked Mary Dixon to marry you a month ago," the young lady continued, "and of course she wouldn't, but she told me about it. I said I'd cure you of a bad habit, and I hope I have. You wouldn't like me to tell people about this, would you?"

The captain shook his head. Comment was beyond him. The growing pallor of his countenance might have been due to chagrin.

"I won't, as long as you behave yourself," said Miss Andrews; "but if you don't, I will. You're a nice old man in some ways. You ought to pick out a woman near your own age, if you can find one that will have you, and settle down. Did you say anything?"

But Captain Predie's emotions, combined with the soap, were mounting beyond human control. Warned by the expression of utter distress upon his ghastly features, Miss Andrews fled.

As she reached the deck her brother and the mate appeared around the corner of a lumber pile upon the dock. They were hot and dusty. The former carried a rapidly blackening eye, and the latter's lips were swollen to double their normal size, but they walked together in great amity as men who have reached an understanding. Miss Andrews eyed her brother with disfavor, but her expression softened as she regarded the mate.

"You're a nice object," she said to the former. "Look at your eye!"

"Can't," said her brother cheerfully. "Say, Martin's all right, and a friend of mine. This eye was just an accident, Angel. I struck it with my elbow."

"Oh," said his sister with sarcasm. "I thought perhaps you hit it with your heel. You're so clumsy. You had an accident too, Mr. Martin."

"Yeth," lisped the mate, with thickening lips.

"How's Predie?" asked her brother, winking at the mate with his uninjured optic.

"Better," said Miss Andrews briefly. "I won't be seen on the street with you while you have such an eye, Bob. I'll have to walk home alone."

"If you'll allow me——" hinted the mate, with alacrity.

Miss Angel inspected him critically. He was tall and broad and his swollen lips were really not so noticeable.

"It's very good of you," she replied, and they followed the retreating figure of Mr. Robert Andrews.

Tono-Bungay

By H. G. Wells

Author of "*The Invisible Man*," "*The Time Machine*," "*The Wheels of Chance*,"
"*The War of the Worlds*," Etc.

A great multitude of readers on both sides of the Atlantic look forward with interest to anything new from the pen of Mr. Wells. No fiction-writer of our day has so well merited and sustained his popularity. In procuring Mr. Wells' latest serial for the readers of "*The Popular*" we were not, however, unduly influenced by his great reputation. It was a great story we were after, and here it is—something entirely different from anything Mr. Wells has heretofore written and decidedly better, we think. With charming ease, the keenest insight and a wealth of humor he has written a story of modern business methods by which colossal fortunes are amassed, through manipulation, bluffing, juggling—"fooling the people all the time." More than that, it is a fascinatingly interesting human document and—but you will judge the other virtues for yourself.

CHAPTER I.

OF BLADESOVER HOUSE, AND MY
MOTHER.

I.



HERE came a time when I realized that Bladesover House was not all it seemed, but when I was a little boy I took the place with the entirest faith as a complete authentic mi-

crocasm. I believed that the Bladesover system was a little working-model—and not so very little either—of the whole world.

Bladesover lies up on the Kentish Downs, eight miles, perhaps, from Ashborough; and its old pavilion, a little wooden parody of the temple of Vesta at Tibur, upon the hill-crest behind the house, commands in theory at least a view of either sea, of the Channel southward and the Thames to the northeast. The park is the second largest in Kent,

finely wooded with well-placed beeches, many elms and some sweet chestnuts, abounding in little valleys and hollows of bracken, with spring and a stream and three fine ponds and multitudes of fallow deer.

The house was built in the eighteenth century, it is of pale red brick in the style of a French château, and save for one pass among the crests which opens to blue distances, to minute, remote, oastset farmhouses and copses and wheat-fields and the occasional gleam of water, its hundred and seventeen windows look on nothing but its own wide and handsome territories. A semi-circular screen of great beeches masks the church and village, which cluster picturesquely about the highroad along the skirts of the great park.

Head and center of our system was Lady Drew, her "leddyship," shriveled, garrulous, with a wonderful memory for genealogies and very, very old, and beside her and nearly as old, Miss Somerville, her cousin and companion.

These two old souls lived like dried-up kernels in the great shell of Blades-over House, the shell that had once been gaily full of fops, of fine ladies in powder and patches and courtly gentlemen with swords; and when there was no company they spent whole days in the corner parlor just over the housekeeper's room, between reading and slumber and caressing their two pet dogs.

My mother was the housekeeper at Bladesover. I was an only child, and to this day I do not know whether my father is living or dead. He fled my mother's virtues before my distincter memories began. He left no traces in his flight, and she, in her indignation, destroyed every vestige that she could of him. Never a photograph nor a scrap of his handwriting have I seen; and it was, I know, only the accepted code of virtue and discretion that prevented her destroying her marriage-certificate, and so making a clean sweep of her matrimonial humiliation.

I suppose I must inherit something of the moral stupidity that could enable her to make a holocaust of every little personal thing she had of him. There must have been presents made by him as a lover, for example—books with kindly inscriptions, letters perhaps, a flattened flower, a ring, or suchlike gage. She kept her wedding-ring, of course, but all the others she destroyed. She never told me his Christian name or indeed spoke a word to me of him, though at times I came near daring to ask her; and what I have of him—it isn't much—I got from his brother, my hero, my uncle Ponderevo.

She wore her ring; her marriage-certificate she kept in a sealed envelope in the very bottom of her largest trunk, and me she sustained at a private school among the Kentish hills. You must not think I was always at Bladesover—even in my holidays. If at the time these came round, Lady Drew was vexed by recent company, or for any other reason wished to take it out of my mother, then she used to ignore the customary reminder my mother gave her, and I "stayed on" at the school.

But such occasions were rare, and I suppose that between ten and fourteen I averaged fifty days a year at Bladesover. About the park there were some elements of a liberal education; there was a great space of green sward not given over to manure and food grubbing; there was mystery, there was matter for the imagination. It was still a park of deer. I saw something of the life of these dappled creatures, heard the belling of stags, came upon young fawns among the bracken, found bones, skulls, and antlers in lonely places. There were corners that gave a gleam of meaning to the word forest, glimpses of unstudied natural splendor. There was a slope of bluebells in the broken sunlight under the newly green beeches in the West Wood that is now precious sapphire in my memory; it was the first time that I knowingly met Beauty.

And in the house there were books. The rubbish old Lady Drew read I never saw; stuff of the Maria Monk type, I have since gathered; had a fascination for her; but back in the past there had been a Drew of intellectual enterprise, Sir Cuthbert, the son of Sir Matthew who built the house; and thrust away, neglected and despised, in an old room up-stairs, were books and treasures of his that my mother let me rout among during a spell of wintry wet.

These readings whetted my taste for more, and surreptitiously I raided the bookcases in the big saloon. I got through quite a number of books before my sacrilegious temerity was discovered and checked by Ann, the old head housemaid.

2.

And then when I had newly passed my fourteenth birthday, came my tragic disgrace.

It was in my midsummer holidays that the thing happened, and it was through the Honorable Beatrice Normandy. She had "come into my life," as they say, before I was twelve.

She descended unexpectedly into a peaceful interlude. She came into the old nursery up-stairs, and every day she

had tea with us in the housekeeper's room. She was eight, and she came with a nurse called Nannie; and to begin with, I did not like her at all.

The queer chances of later years come between me and a distinctly separated memory of that childish face. When I think of Beatrice, I think of her as I came to know her at a later time, when at last I came to know her so well that indeed now I could draw her, and show a hundred little delicate things you would miss in looking at her. But even then I remember how I noted the infinite delicacy of her childish skin and the fine eyebrow, finer than the finest feather that ever one felt on the breast of a bird.

She was one of those elfin, rather precocious little girls, quick-colored, with dark hair, naturally curling dusky hair that was sometimes astray over her eyes, and eyes that were sometimes impishly dark, and sometimes a clear brown-yellow. And from the very outset, after a most cursory attention to Rabbits, the butler, she decided that the only really interesting thing at the tea-table was myself.

The elders talked in their formal, dull way—telling Nannie the trite old things about the park and the village that they told every one, and Beatrice watched me across the table with a pitiless little curiosity that made me uncomfortable.

"Nannie," she said, pointing, and Nannie left a question of my mother's disregarded to attend to her; "is he a servant-boy?"

"S-s-h," said Nannie. "He's Master Ponderevo."

"Is he a servant-boy?" repeated Beatrice.

"He's a schoolboy," said my mother.

"Then may I talk to him, Nannie?"

Nannie surveyed me with brutal inhumanity. "You mustn't talk too much," she said to her charge, and cut cake into fingers for her. "No," she added decisively, as Beatrice made to speak.

Beatrice became malignant. Her eyes explored me with unjustifiable hostility. "He's got dirty hands," she said,

stabbing at the forbidden fruit. "And there's a fray to his collar."

Then she gave herself up to cake with an appearance of entire forgetfulness of me that filled me with hate and a passionate desire to compel her to admire me. And the next day before tea, I did for the first time in my life, freely, without command or any compulsion, wash my hands.

So our acquaintance began, and presently was deepened by a whim of hers. She had a cold and was kept indoors, and confronted Nannie suddenly with the alternative of being hopelessly naughty, which in her case involved a generous amount of screaming unsuitable for the ears of an elderly, shaky, rich aunt, or having me up to the nursery to play with her all the afternoon, Nannie came down-stairs and borrowed me in a careworn manner, and I was handed over to the little creature as if I was some large variety of kitten.

I had never had anything to do with a little girl before. I thought she was more beautiful and wonderful and bright than anything else could possibly be in life, and she found me the gentlest of slaves—though at the same time, as I made evident, fairly strong. And Nannie was amazed to find the afternoon slip cheerfully and rapidly away. She praised my manners to Lady Drew and to my mother, who said she was glad to hear well of me, and after that I played with Beatrice several times.

The toys she had remain in my memory still as great splendid things, gigantic to all my previous experience of toys, and we even went to the great doll's house on the nursery landing to play discreetly with that, the great doll's house that the Prince Regent had given Sir Harry Drew's first-born—who died at five—that was a not ineffectual model of Bladesover itself, and contained eighty-five dolls and had cost hundreds of pounds. I played under imperious direction with that toy of glory.

I went back to school when that holiday was over, dreaming of beautiful things, and got my especial chum and crony, Ewart, to talk to me of love;

and I made a great story out of the doll's house, a story that, taken over into Ewart's hands, speedily grew to an island doll's city all our own.

One of the dolls, I privately decided, was like Beatrice.

One other holiday there was when I saw something of her—oddly enough my memory of that second holiday in which she played a part is vague—and then came a gap of a year, and then my disgrace.

3.

Now I sit down to write my story and tell over again things in their order, I find for the first time how inconsecutive and irrational a thing the memory can be. One recalls acts and cannot recall motives; one recalls quite vividly moments that stand out inexplicably—things adrift, joining on to nothing, leading nowhere.

I think I must have seen Beatrice and her half-brother quite a number of times in my last holiday at Bladesover, but I really cannot recall more than a little of the quality of the circumstances. That great crisis of my boyhood stands out very vividly as an effect, as a sort of cardinal thing for me, but when I look for details—particularly details that led up to the crisis—I cannot find them in any developing order at all.

This half-brother, Archie Garvell, was a new factor in the affair. I remember him clearly as a fair-haired, supercilious-looking, weedily-lank boy, much taller than I, but I should imagine very little heavier, and that we hated each other by a sort of instinct from the beginning; and yet I cannot remember my first meeting with him at all.

I am certain I knew quite a lot about love at fourteen, and that I was quite as much in love with Beatrice then as any impassioned adult could be, and that Beatrice was, in her way, in love with me. It is part of the decent and useful pretenses of our world that children of the age at which we were think nothing, feel nothing, know nothing of love. But indeed I cannot avoid telling

that Beatrice and I talked of love, and kissed and embraced one another.

I recall something of one talk under the overhanging bushes of the shrubbery—I on the park side of the stone wall, and the lady of my worship a little inelegantly astride thereon. Inelegantly do I say? You should have seen the sweet imp as I remember her. Just her poise on the wall comes suddenly clear before me, and behind her the light various branches of the bushes of the shrubbery that my feet might not profane, and far away and high behind her, dim and stately, the cornice of the great façade of Bladesover rose against the dappled sky. Our talk must have been serious and businesslike, for we were discussing my social position.

"I don't love Archie," she had said, apropos of nothing; and then in a whisper, leaning forward with the hair about her face, "I love *you*!"

But she had been a little pressing to have it clear that I was not and could not be a servant.

"You'll never be a servant—ever!"

I swore that very readily, and it is a vow I have kept by nature.

"What will you be?" said she.

I ran my mind hastily over the professions.

"Will you be a soldier?" she asked.

"And be bawled at by duffers? No fear!" said I. "Leave that to the plow-boys."

"But an officer?"

"I don't know," I said, evading a shameful difficulty. "I'd rather go into the navy."

"Wouldn't you like to fight?"

"I'd like to fight," I said. "But a common soldier—it's no honor to have to be told to fight and to be looked down upon while you do it, and how could I be an officer?"

"Couldn't you be?" she said, and looked at me doubtfully; and the spaces of the social system opened between us.

Then, as became a male of spirit, I took upon myself to brag and lie my way through this trouble. I said I was a poor man, and poor men went into the navy; that I "knew" mathematics,

which no army officer did; and I claimed Nelson for an exemplar, and spoke very highly of my outlook upon blue water. "He loved Lady Hamilton," I said, "although she *was* a lady—and I will love you."

We were somewhere near that when the egregious governess became audible, calling, "Beeeee-atrice! Beeeeee-e-atrice!"

"Sniffy beast!" said my lady, and tried to get on with the conversation; but that governess made things impossible.

"Come here!" said my lady suddenly, holding out a grubby hand; and I went very close to her, and she put her little head down upon the wall until her black fog of hair tickled my cheek.

"You are my humble, faithful lover," she demanded in a whisper, her warm flushed face near touching mine, and her eyes very dark and lustrous.

"I am your humble, faithful lover," I whispered back.

And she put her arm about my head and put out her lips, and we kissed, and boy though I was, I was all a-tremble. So we two kissed for the first time.

"Beeee-e-a-trice!"—fearfully close.

My lady had vanished, with one wild kick of her black-stockinged leg. A moment after, I heard her sustaining the reproaches of her governess, and explaining her failure to answer with an admirable lucidity and disingenuousness.

I felt it was unnecessary for me to be seen just then, and I vanished guiltily round the corner into the West Wood, and so to love-dreams and single-handed play, wandering along one of those meandering bracken valleys that varied Bladesover park. And that day and for many days that kiss upon my lips was a seal and by night the seed of dreams.

4.

Then I remember an expedition we made—she, I, and her half-brother—into those West Woods—they two were supposed to be playing in the shrubbery—and how we were Indians there, and made a wigwam out of a pile of beech

logs, and how we stalked deer, crept near and watched rabbits feeding in a glade, and almost got a squirrel. It was play seasoned with plentiful disputing between me and young Garvell, for each firmly insisted upon the leading rôles, and only my wider reading—I had read ten stories to his one—gave me the ascendancy over him. Also I scored over him by knowing how to find the eagle in a bracken stem.

And somehow—I don't remember what led to it at all—I and Beatrice, two hot and ruffled creatures, crept in among the tall bracken and hid from him. The great fronds rose above us, five feet or more, and as I had learned how to wriggle through that undergrowth with the minimum of betrayal by tossing greenery above, I led the way. The ground under bracken is beautifully clear and faintly scented in warm weather; the stems come up black and then green; if you crawl flat, it is a tropical forest in miniature.

I led the way and Beatrice crawled behind, and then as the green of the farther glade opened before us, stopped. She crawled up to me, her hot little face came close to mine; once more she looked and breathed close to me, and suddenly she flung her arm about my neck and dragged me to earth beside her, and kissed me and kissed me again. We kissed, we embraced and kissed again, all without a word; we desisted, we stared and hesitated—then in a suddenly damped mood and a little perplexed at ourselves, crawled out, to be presently run down and caught in the tamest way by Archie.

That comes back very clearly to me, and other vague memories—I know old Hall and his gun, out shooting at jackdaws, came into our common experiences, but I don't remember how; and then at last, abruptly, our fight in the Warren stands out. The Warren, like most places in England that have that name, was not particularly a warren; it was a long slope of thorns and beeches through which a path ran, and made an alternative route to the down-hill carriage-road between Bladesover and Ropedean.

I don't know how we three got there, but I have an uncertain fancy it was connected with a visit paid by the governor to the Ropedean vicarage people. But suddenly Archie and I, in discussing a game, fell into a dispute for Beatrice. I had made him the fairest offer: I was to be a Spanish nobleman, she was to be my wife, and he was to be a tribe of Indians trying to carry her off. It seems to me a fairly attractive offer to a boy to be a whole tribe of Indians with a chance of such a booty. But Archie suddenly took offense.

"No," he said; "we can't have that."

"Can't have what?"

"You can't be a gentleman, because you aren't. And you can't play Beatrice is your wife. It's—it's impertinent."

"But——" I said, and looked at her.

Some earlier grudge in the day's affair must have been in Archie's mind. "We let you play with us," said Archie; "but we can't have things like that."

"What rot!" said Beatrice. "He can if he likes."

But he carried his point. I let him carry it, and only began to grow angry three or four minutes later. Then we were still discussing play and disputing about another game. Nothing seemed right for all of us.

"We don't want you to play with us at all," said Archie.

"Yes, we do," said Beatrice.

"He drops his aitches like anything."

"No, E doesn't," said I, in the heat of the moment.

"There you go!" he cried. "E, he says. E! E! E!"

He pointed a finger at me. He had struck to the heart of my shame. I made the only possible reply by a rush at him. "Hello!" he cried, at my black-avised attack. He dropped back into an attitude that had some style in it, parried my blow, got back at my cheek, and laughed with surprise and relief at his own success. Whereupon I became a thing of murderous rage. He could box as well or better than I—he had yet to realize I knew anything of that

at all—but I had fought once or twice to a finish with bare fists, I was used to inflicting and enduring savage hurting, and I doubt if he had ever fought.

He seemed to think that first hit of his and one or two others were going to matter, that I ought to give in when presently my lip bled and dropped blood upon my clothes. So before we had been at it a minute he had ceased to be aggressive except in momentary spurts, and I was knocking him about almost as I wanted to do, and demanding breathlessly and fiercely, after our school manner, whether he had had enough, not knowing that by his high code and his soft training it was equally impossible for him to either buck up and beat me or give in.

I have a very distinct impression of Beatrice dancing about us during the affair in a state of unladylike appreciation, but I was too preoccupied to hear much of what she was saying. But she certainly backed us both, and I am inclined to think now—it may be the disillusionment of my ripened years—whichever she thought was winning.

Then young Garvell, giving way before my slugging, stumbled and fell over a big flint, and I, still following the tradition of my class and school, promptly flung myself on him to finish him. We were busy with each other on the ground when we became aware of a dreadful interruption.

"Shut up, you fool!" said Archie.

"Oh, Lady Drew!" I heard Beatrice cry. "They're fighting! They're fighting something awful!"

I looked over my shoulder. Archie's wish to get up became irresistible, and my resolve to go on with him vanished altogether.

I became aware of the two old ladies' presences of black and purple silk and fur and shining dark things; they had walked up through the Warren, while the horses took the hill easily, and so had come upon us. Beatrice had gone to them at once with an air of taking refuge, and stood beside and a little behind them. We both rose dejectedly. The two old ladies were evidently quite dreadfully shocked, and peering at us

with their poor old eyes; and never had I seen such a tremblement in Lady Drew's lorgnettes.

"You've never been fighting?" said Lady Drew. "You have been fighting?"

"It wasn't proper fighting," snapped Archie, with accusing eyes on me.

"It's Mrs. Ponderevo's George!" said Miss Somerville, so adding a conviction for ingratitude to my evident sacrilege.

"How could he *dare*?" cried Lady Drew, becoming very awful.

"He broke the rules," said Archie, sobbing for breath. "I slipped, and—he hit me while I was down. He knelt on me."

"How could you *dare*?" said Lady Drew.

I produced an experienced handkerchief rolled up into a tight ball, and wiped the blood from my chin, but I offered no explanation of my daring. Among other things that prevented that, I was too short of breath.

"He didn't fight fair," sobbed Archie.

Beatrice, from behind the old ladies, regarded me intently and without hostility. I am inclined to think the modification of my face through the damage to my lip interested her. It became dimly apparent to my confused intelligence that I must not say these two had been playing with me. That would not be after the rules of their game. I resolved in this difficult situation upon a sulky silence, and to take whatever consequences might follow.

5.

The powers of justice in Bladesover made an extraordinary mess of my case.

I have regretfully to admit that the Honorable Beatrice Normandy did, at the age of ten, betray me, abandon me, and lie most abominably about me. She was, as a matter of fact, panic-stricken about me, conscience-stricken too; she bolted from the very thought of my being her affianced lover and so forth, from the faintest memory of kissing; she was indeed altogether disgraceful and human in her betrayal. She and her half-brother lied in perfect concord,

and I was presented as a wanton assailant of my social betters. They were waiting about in the Warren when I came up and spoke to them, etc.

On the whole, I now perceive Lady Drew's decisions were, in the light of the evidence, reasonable and merciful.

They were conveyed to me by my mother, who was, I really believe, even more shocked by the grossness of my social insubordination than Lady Drew. She dilated on her ladyship's kindnesses to me, on the effrontery and wickedness of my procedure, and so came at last to the terms of my penance. "You must go up to young Mr. Garvell, and beg his pardon."

"I won't beg his pardon," I said, speaking for the first time.

My mother paused, incredulous.

I folded my arms on her table-cloth, and delivered my wicked little ultimatum. "I won't beg his pardon no-how," I said. "See?"

"Then you will have to go off to your uncle Ponderevo at Wimblehurst."

"I don't care where I have to go or what I have to do, I won't beg his pardon," I said.

And I didn't.

After that I was one against the world. Perhaps in my mother's heart there lurked some pity for me, but she did not show it. She took the side of the young gentleman; she tried hard, she tried very hard, to make me say I was sorry I had struck him. Sorry!

I couldn't explain.

Well, anyhow I never said I was sorry for pounding young Garvell, and I am not sorry to this day.

CHAPTER II.

I AM LAUNCHED.

I.

I do not remember much of my journey to Wimblehurst with my mother, except the image of her as sitting bolt upright, as rather disdainful the third-class carriage in which we traveled, and how she looked away from me out of the window when she spoke of my

uncle. "I have not seen your uncle," she said, "since he was a boy." She added grudgingly: "Then he was supposed to be clever."

She took little interest in such qualities as cleverness.

"He married about three years ago, and set up for himself in Wimbleshurst. So I suppose she had some money."

She mused on scenes she had long dismissed from her mind. "Teddy," she said at last, in the tone of one who has been feeling in the dark and finds. "He was called Teddy—about your age—now he must be twenty-six or seven."

I thought of my uncle as Teddy directly I saw him; there was something in his personal appearance that in the light of that memory phrased itself at once as Teddiness—a certain Teddity. To describe it in any other terms is more difficult.

He whisked out of his shop upon the pavement, a short figure in gray and wearing gray carpet slippers; one had a sense of a young fattish face behind gilt glasses, wiry hair that stuck up and forward over the forehead, an irregular nose that had its aquiline moments, and that the body betrayed an equatorial laxity, an incipient "bay-window," as the image goes. He jerked out of the shop, came to a stand on the pavement outside, regarded something in the window with infinite appreciation, stroked his chin, and, as abruptly shot sideways into the door again, charging through it as it were behind an extended hand.

"That must be him," said my mother, catching her breath.

We came past the window whose contents I was presently to know by heart, a very ordinary chemist's window except that there was a frictional electrical machine, an air-pump and two or three tripods and retorts replacing the customary blue, yellow, and red bottles above. There was a plaster of paris horse to indicate veterinary medicines among these breakables, and below were scent packets and diffusers and sponges and soda-water siphons and suchlike things. Only in the middle there was a rubricated card, very neatly painted by hand, with these words:

BUY PONDEREVO'S COUGH LINCTUS
NOW!

WHY?

TWOPENCE LESS THAN IN WINTER
YOU STORE APPLES! WHY NOT THE
MEDICINE YOU ARE BOUND TO
NEED?

—in which appeal I was to recognize presently my uncle's distinctive note.

My uncle's face appeared above. a card of infants' comforters in the glass pane of the door. I perceived his eyes were brown, and that his glasses creased his nose. It was manifest he didn't know us from Adam. A stare of scrutiny allowed an expression of commercial deference to appear in front of it, and my uncle flung open the door.

"You don't know me?" panted my mother.

My uncle would not own he did not, but his curiosity was manifest. My mother sat down on one of the little chairs before the soap and patent-medicine-piled counter, and her lips opened and closed.

"A glass of water, madam," said my uncle, waved his hand in a sort of curve, and shot away.

My mother drank the water and spoke. "That boy," she said, "takes after his father. He grows more like him every day. And so I have brought him to you."

"His father, madam?"

"George."

For a moment the chemist was still at a loss. He stood behind the counter with the glass my mother had returned to him in his hand. Then comprehension grew.

"By gosh!" he said. "Lord!" he cried. His glasses fell off. He disappeared, replacing them, behind a pile of boxed-up bottles of blood-mixture. "Eleven thousand virgins!" I heard him cry. The glass was banged down. "Oriental Gums!"

He shot away out of the shop through some masked door. One heard his voice: "Susan! Susan!"

Then he reappeared with an extended hand. "Well, how are you?" he said.

"I was never so surprised in my life. Fancy! *You!*"

He shook my mother's impassive hand and then mine very warmly, holding his glasses on with his forefinger.

"Come right in!" he cried—"come right in! Better late than never!" and led the way into the parlor behind the shop.

After Bladesover that apartment struck me as stuffy and petty, but it was very comfortable in comparison with the living-room. It had a faint disintegrating smell of meals about it, and my most immediate impression was of the remarkable fact that something was hung about or wrapped round or draped over everything. There was bright-patterned muslin round the gas-bracket in the middle of the room, round the mirror over the mantel, stuff with ball-fringe along the mantel and casing in the fireplace—I first saw ball-fringe here—and even the lamp on the little bureau wore a shade like a large muslin hat.

The table-cloth had ball-fringe and so had the window-curtains, and the carpet was a bed of roses. There were little cupboards on either side of the fireplace, and in the recesses, mill-made shelves packed with books, and enriched with pinked American cloth. There was a dictionary lying face downward on the table, and the open bureau was littered with foolscap paper and the evidences of recently abandoned toil. My eye caught, "The Ponderevo Patent Flat, a Machine you can Live in," written in large firm letters. My uncle opened a little door like a cupboard door in the corner of this room, and revealed the narrowest twist of staircase I had ever set eyes upon. "Susan!" he bawled again. "Wantje. Some one to see you. Surprisin'."

There came an inaudible reply, and a sudden loud bump over our heads as of some article of domestic utility pettishly flung aside, then the cautious steps of some one descending the twist, and then my aunt appeared in the doorway with her hand upon the jamb.

"It's Aunt Ponderevo," cried my uncle, "George's wife—and she's

brought over her son!" His eye roved about the room. He darted to the bureau with a sudden impulse, and turned the sheet about the patent flat face down. Then he waved his glasses at us. "*You* know, Susan, my elder brother George. I told you about 'im lots of times."

He fretted across to the hearth-rug, and took up a position there, replaced his glasses and coughed.

My aunt Susan seemed to be taking it in. She was then a rather pretty slender woman of twenty-three or four, I suppose, and I remember being struck by the blueness of her eyes and the clear freshness of her complexion. She had little features, a button nose, a pretty chin and a long graceful neck that stuck out of her pale-blue cotton morning dress.

There was a look of half-assumed perplexity on her face, a little quizzical wrinkle of the brow that suggested a faintly amused attempt to follow my uncle's mental operations, a vain attempt and a certain hopelessness that had in succession become habitual. She seemed to be saying, "Oh, Lord! What's he giving me *this* time?" And as I came to know her better I detected, as a complication of her effort of apprehension, a subsidiary riddle to "What's he giving me?" and that was—to borrow a phrase from my school-boy language—"Is it keeps?" She looked at my mother and me, and back to her husband again.

"You know," he said—"George!"

"Well," she said to my mother, descending the last three steps of the staircase and holding out her hand, "you're welcome. Though it's a surprise. I can't ask you to *have* anything, I'm afraid, for there isn't anything in the house." She smiled and looked at her husband banteringly. "Unless he makes up something with his old chemicals, which he's quite equal to doing."

My mother shook hands stiffly, and told me to kiss my aunt.

"Well, let's all sit down," said my uncle, suddenly whistling through his clenched teeth, and briskly rubbing his hands together. He put up a chair for

my mother, raised the blind of the little window, lowered it again, and returned to his hearth-rug. "I'm sure," he said, as one who decides, "I'm very glad to see you."

2.

As they talked I gave my attention pretty exclusively to my uncle.

I noted him in great detail. I remember now his partially unbuttoned waistcoat, as though something had occurred to distract him as he did it up, and a little cut upon his chin. I liked a certain humor in his eyes. I watched, too, with the fascination these things have for an observant boy, the play of his lips—they were a little oblique, and there was something "slipshod," if one may strain a word so far, about his mouth so that he lisped and sibilated ever and again—and the coming and going of a curious expression, triumphant in quality it was, upon his face as he talked.

He fingered his glasses, which did not seem to fit his nose, fretted with things in his waistcoat pockets or put his hands behind him, looked over our heads, and ever and again rose to his toes and dropped back on his heels. He had a way of drawing air in at times through his teeth that gave a whispering zest to his speech. It's a sound I can only represent as a soft Zzz.

He did most of the talking. My mother repeated what she had already said in the shop, "I have brought George over to you," and then desisted for a time from the real business in hand. "You find this a comfortable house?" she asked; and this being affirmed: "It looks—very convenient. Not too big to be a trouble to you. You like Wimbleshurst, I suppose?"

My uncle retorted with some inquiries about the great people of Bladesover, and my mother answered in the character of a personal friend of Lady Drew's. The talk hung for a time, and then my uncle embarked upon a dissertation upon Wimbleshurst.

"This place," he began, "isn't of course quite the place I ought to be in."

My mother nodded significantly.

"It gives me no Scope," he went on. "It's dead-and-alive. Nothing happens."

"He's always wanting something to happen," said my aunt Susan. "Some day he'll get a shower of things and they'll be too much for him."

"Not they," said my uncle, buoyantly.

"Do you find business—slack?" asked my mother.

"Oh! one rubs along. But there's no Development—no Growth. They just come along here and buy pills when they want 'em—and a horseball or such. They've got to be ill before there's a prescription. That sort they are. You can't get 'em to launch out, you can't get 'em to take up anything new. F'rinstance, I've been trying lately—induce them to buy their medicines in advance, and in larger quantities. But they won't look at it! Then I tried to float a little notion of mine, sort of insurance scheme for colds; you pay so much a week, and when you've got a cold you get a bottle of Cough Linctus so long as you can produce a substantial sniff. See? But Lord! they've no capacity for ideas, they don't catch on; no Jump about the place, no Life! Live!—they trickle, and what one has to do here is to trickle too—Zzz."

"Ah!" said my mother.

"It doesn't suit me," said my uncle. "I'm the cascading sort."

"George was that," said my mother after a pondering moment.

My aunt Susan took up the parable with an affectionate glance at her husband.

"He's always trying to make his old business jump," she said. "Always putting fresh cards in the window, or getting up to something. You'd hardly believe. It makes *me* jump sometimes."

"But it does no good," said my uncle.

"It does no good," said his wife. "It's not his miloo."

Presently they came upon a wide pause.

From the beginning of their conversation there had been the promise of this pause, and I pricked my ears. I knew perfectly what was bound to

come; they were going to talk of my father. I was enormously strengthened in my persuasion when I found my mother's eye resting thoughtfully upon me in the silence, and then my uncle looked at me and then my aunt. I struggled unavailingly to produce an expression of meek stupidity.

"I think," said my uncle, "that George will find it more amusing to have a turn in the market-place than to sit here talking with us. There's a pair of stocks there, George—very interesting. Old-fashioned stocks."

"I don't mind sitting here," I said.

My uncle rose and in the most friendly way led me through the shop. He stood on his door-step and jerked amiable directions to me.

"Ain't it sleepy, George, eh? There's the butcher's dog over there, asleep in the road—half an hour from midday! If the last Trump sounded I don't believe it would wake. Nobody would wake! The chaps up there in the churchyard—they'd just turn over and say: 'Naar—you don't catch us, you don't! See?' Well, you'll find the stocks just round the corner."

He watched me out of sight.

So I never heard what they said about my father after all.

3.

When I returned, my uncle had in some remarkable way become larger and central.

"Thatchu, George?" he cried, when the shop-door bell sounded. "Come right through;" and I found him, as it were, in the chairman's place before the draped grate.

The three of them regarded me.

"We have been talking of making you a chemist, George," said my uncle.

My mother looked at me. "I had hoped," she said, "that Lady Drew would have done something for him——" She stopped.

"In what way?" said my uncle.

"She might have spoken to some one, got him into something, perhaps." She had the servant's invincible persuasion that all good things are done by patronage.

"He is not the sort of boy for whom things are done," she added, dismissing these dreams. "He doesn't accommodate himself. When he thinks Lady Drew wishes a thing, he seems not to wish it. Toward Mr. Redgrave too he has been—disrespectful—he is like his father."

"Who's Mr. Redgrave?"

"The vicar."

"A bit independent?" said my uncle, briskly.

"Disobedient," said my mother. "He has no idea of his place. He seems to think he can get on by slighting people and flouting them. He'll learn perhaps before it is too late."

My uncle stroked his cut chin and regarded me. "Have you learned any Latin?" he asked abruptly.

I said I had not.

"He'll have to learn a little Latin," he explained to my mother, "to qualify. H'm. He could go down to the chap at the grammar-school here—it's just been routed into existence again by the charity commissioners—and have lessons."

"What, me learn Latin!" I cried with emotion.

"A little," he said.

"I've always wanted——" I said, and, "*Latin!*"

I had long been obsessed by the idea that having no Latin was a disadvantage in the world, and Archie Garvell had driven the point of this pretty earnestly home. The literature I had read at Bladesover had all tended that way. Latin had had a quality of emancipation for me that I find it difficult to convey. And suddenly, when I had supposed all learning was at an end for me, I heard this!

"It's no good to you, of course," said my uncle, "except to pass exams with, but there you are!"

"You'll have to learn Latin because you have to learn Latin," said my mother, "not because you *want* to. And afterward you will have to learn all sorts of other things."

The idea that I was to go on learning, that to read and master the contents of books was still to be justifiable as a

duty, overwhelmed all other facts. I had had it rather clear in my mind for some weeks that all that kind of opportunity might close to me forever. I began to take a lively interest in this new project.

"Then shall I live here?" I asked, "with you, and study—as well as work in the shop?"

"That's the way of it," said my uncle.

I parted from my mother that day in a dream, so sudden and important was this new aspect of things to me. I was to learn Latin! Now that the humiliation of my failure at Bladesover was past for her, now that she had a little got over her first intense repugnance at this resort to my uncle and contrived something that seemed like a possible provision for my future, the tenderness natural to a parting far more significant than any of our previous partings crept into her manner.

She sat in the train to return, I remember, and I stood at the open door of her compartment, and neither of us knew how soon we should cease forever to be a trouble to one another.

"You must be a good boy, George," she said. "You must learn. And you mustn't set yourself up against those who are above you and better than you. Or envy them."

"No, mother," I said.

I promised carelessly. Her eyes were fixed upon me. I was wondering whether I could by any means begin Latin that night.

Something touched her heart then, some thought, some memory; perhaps some premonition. The solitary porter began slamming carriage-doors.

"George," she said hastily, almost shamefully, "kiss me!"

I stepped up into her compartment as she bent forward. She caught me in her arms quite eagerly, she pressed me to her—a strange thing for her to do. I perceived her eyes were extraordinarily bright, and then this brightness burst along the lower lids and rolled down her cheeks.

For the first and last time in my life I saw my mother's tears. Then she had gone, leaving me discomforted and

perplexed, forgetting for a time even that I was to learn Latin, thinking of my mother as of something new and strange.

The thing recurred though I sought to dismiss it, it stuck itself into my memory against the day of fuller understanding. Poor, proud, habitual, sternly narrow soul! poor, difficult and misunderstanding son! it was the first time that ever it dawned upon me that my mother also might perhaps feel.

4.

My mother died suddenly and, it was thought by Lady Drew, inconsiderately, the following spring. Her ladyship instantly fled to Folkstone with Miss Somerville, until the funeral should be over and my mother's successor installed.

My uncle took me over to the funeral. I remember there was a sort of prolonged crisis in the days preceding this because, directly he heard of my loss, he had sent a pair of check trousers to the Judkins people in London to be dyed black, and they did not come back in time. He became very excited on the third day, and sent a number of increasingly fiery telegrams without any result whatever, and succumbed next morning with a very ill grace to my aunt Susan's insistence upon the resources of his dress suit.

In my memory those black legs of his, in a particularly thin and shiny black cloth—for evidently his dress suit dated from adolescent and slenderer days—straddle like the Colossus of Rhodes over my approach to my mother's funeral. Moreover, I was inconvenienced and distracted by a silk hat he had bought me, my first silk hat, much ennobled, as his was also, by a deep mourning-band.

I remember, but rather indistinctly, my mother's white-paneled housekeeper's room and the touch of oddness about it that she was not there, and the various familiar faces made strange by black, and I seem to recall the exaggerated self-consciousness that arose out of their focused attention. No doubt the sense of the new silk hat

came and went and came again in my emotional chaos.

Then something comes out clear and sorrowful, rises out clear and sheer from among all these rather base and inconsequent things, and once again I walk before all the other mourners close behind her coffin as it is carried along the churchyard path to her grave, with the old vicar's slow voice saying regretfully and unconvincingly above me, triumphant solemn things.

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Never die! The day was a high and glorious morning in spring, and all the trees were budding and bursting into green. Everywhere there were blossoms and flowers; the pear-trees and cherry-trees in the sexton's garden were sunlit snow, there were nodding daffodils and early tulips in the graveyard beds, great multitudes of daisies, and everywhere the birds seemed singing. And in the middle was the brown coffin end, tilting on men's shoulders, and half clouded by the vicar's Oxford hood.

And so we came to my mother's waiting grave.

For a time I was very observant, watching the coffin lowered, hearing the words of the ritual. It seemed a very curious business altogether.

Suddenly as the service drew to its end, I felt something had still to be said which had not been said, realized that she had withdrawn in silence, neither forgiving me nor hearing from me—those now lost assurances. Suddenly I knew I had not understood. Suddenly I saw her tenderly; remembered not so much tender or kindly things of her as her crossed wishes and the ways in which I had thwarted her. Surprisingly I realized that behind all her hardness and severity she had loved me, that I was the only thing she had ever loved and that until this moment I had never loved her. And now she was there and deaf and blind to me, pitifully defeated in her designs for me,

covered from me so that she could not know.

I dug my nails into the palms of my hands, I set my teeth, but tears blinded me, sobs would have choked me had speech been required of me. The old vicar read on, there came a mumbled response—and so on to the end. I wept as it were internally, and only when we had come out of the churchyard could I think and speak calmly again.

Stamped across this memory are the little black figures of my uncle and Rabbits, the butler, telling Avebury, the sexton and undertaker, that "it had all passed off very well—very well indeed."

CHAPTER III.

THE WIMBLEHURST APPRENTICESHIP AND STUDENT DAYS IN LONDON.

I.

So far as I can remember now, except for that one emotional phase by the graveside, I passed through all these experiences rather callously. I had already, with the facility of youth, changed my world, ceased to think at all of the old school routine, and put Bladesover aside for digestion at a later stage.

I took up my new world in Wimbleshurst with the chemist's shop as its hub, set to work at Latin and *materia medica*, and concentrated upon the present with all my heart. Wimbleshurst is an exceptionally quiet and gray Sussex town, rare among south of England towns in being largely built of stone. I found something very agreeable and picturesque in its clean cobbled street, its odd turnings and abrupt corners, and in the pleasant park that crowds up one side of the town.

The whole place is under the Eastry dominion, and it was the Eastry influence and dignity that kept its railway-station a mile and three-quarters away. Eastry House is so close that it dominates the whole; one goes across the market-place—with its old lockup and stocks—past the great pre-Reformation church, a fine gray shell, like some empty skull from which the life has

fled, and there at once are the huge wrought-iron gates, and one peeps through them to see the façade of this place, very white and large and fine, down a long avenue of yews.

Eastry was far greater than Bladesover, and an altogether completer example of the eighteenth-century system. It ruled not two villages but a borough, that had sent its sons and cousins to Parliament almost as a matter of right so long as its franchise endured. Every one was in the system, every one—except my uncle. He stood out and complained.

My uncle was the first real breach I found in the great front of Bladesover the world had presented me. But my uncle had no respect for Bladesover and Eastry—none whatever. He did not believe in them. He was blind even to what they were. He propounded strange phrases about them, he exfoliated and wagged about novel and incredible ideas.

"This place," said my uncle, surveying it from his open doorway in the dignified stillness of a summer afternoon, "wants Waking Up!"

I was sorting up patent medicines in the corner.

"I'd like to let a dozen young Americans loose into it," said my uncle. "Then we'd see."

I made a tick against Mother Ship-ton's Sleeping Syrup. We had cleared our forward stock.

"Things must be happening *somewhere*, George," he broke out in a querulously rising note as he came back into the little shop. He fiddled with the piled dummy boxes of fancy soap and scent and so forth that adorned the end of the counter, then turned about petulantly, stuck his hands deeply into his pockets and withdrew one to scratch his head. "I must do *something*," he said. "I can't stand it."

"I must invent something. And shove it. I could."

"Or a play. There's a deal of money in a play, George. What would you think of me writing a play—eh? There's all sorts of things to be done."

"Or the stog-igchange."

He fell into that meditative whistling of his.

"Sac-ramental wine!" he swore, "this isn't the world—it's Cold Mutton Fat! That's what Wimbleshurst is! Cold Mutton Fat!—dead and stiff! And I'm buried in it up to the armpits. Nothing ever happens, nobody wants things to happen 'cept me! Up in London, George, things happen. America! I wish to Heaven, George, I'd been born American—where things hum."

"What can one *do* here? How can one grow? While we're sleepin' here with our Capital oozing away—into Lord Eastry's pockets for rent—men are up there——" He indicated London as remotely over the top of the dispensing-counter, and then as a scene of great activity by a whirl of the hand and a wink and a meaning smile at me.

"What sort of things do they do?" I asked.

"Rush about," he said, "Do things. Somethin' glorious. There's cover gambling. Ever heard of that, George?" He drew the air in through his teeth. "You put down a hundred, say, and buy ten thousand pounds' worth. See? That's a cover of one per cent. Things go up one, you see, realize cent per cent.; down, whiff, it's gone! Try again! Cent per cent., George, every day. Men are made or done for in an hour. And the shoutin'. Zzz—well, that's one way, George. Then another way—there's Corners!"

"They're rather big things, aren't they?" I ventured.

"Oh, if you go in for wheat or steel—yes. But suppose you tackled a little thing, George. Just some little thing that only needed a few thousands. Drugs, for example. Shoved all you had into it—staked your liver on it, so to speak. Take a drug, take ipecac, for example. Take a lot of ipecac. Take all there is! See? There you are! There aren't unlimited supplies of ipecacuanha—can't be—and it's a thing people *must* have. Then quinine, again! You watch your chance, wait for a tropical war breaking out, let's say, and collar all the quinine. Where *are* they?"

Must have quinine, you know! Eh? Zzz.

"Lord! there's no end of things—no end of *little* things. Dill-water—all the suff'ring babes yowling for it. Eucalyptus again—cascara—witch-hazel—menthol—all the toothache things. Then there's antiseptics, and curare, cocaine, and——"

"Rather a nuisance to the doctors," I reflected.

"They got to look out for themselves. By Jove, yes. They'll do you if they can, and you do them. Like brigands. That makes it romantic. That's the Romance of Commerce, George. You're in the mountains there! Think of having all the quinine in the world, and some millionaire's pampud wife gone ill with malaria, eh? That's a squeeze, George, eh? Eh? Millionaire on his motor-car outside, offering you any price you liked. That 'u'd wake up Wimbleshurst—— Lord! You haven't an Idea down here. Not an idea. Zzz."

He passed into a rapt dream, from which escaped such fragments as: "Fifty per cent. advance, Sir; security—to-morrow. Zzz."

The idea of cornering a drug struck upon my mind then as a sort of irresponsible monkey's trick that no one would ever be permitted to do in reality. It was the sort of nonsense one would talk to make Ewart laugh and set him going on to still odder possibilities. I thought it was part of my uncle's way of talking. But I've learned differently since.

The whole trend of money-making is to foresee something that will presently be needed and put it out of reach, and then to haggle yourself wealthy. You buy up land upon which people will presently want to build houses, you secure rights that will bar vitally important developments, and so on, and so on. Of course the naive intelligence of a boy does not grasp the subtler developments of human inadequacy. He begins life with a disposition to believe in the wisdom of grown-up people, he does not realize how casual and disingenuous has been the development of

law and custom, and he thinks that somewhere in the state there is a power as irresistible as a head master's to check mischievous and foolish enterprise of every sort.

I will confess that when my uncle talked of cornering quinine, I had a clear impression that any one who contrived to do that would pretty certainly go to jail. Now I know that any one who could really bring it off would be much more likely to go to the House of Lords!

My uncle ranged over the gilt labels of his bottles and drawers for a while, dreaming of corners in this and that. But at last he reverted to Wimbleshurst again.

"You got to be in London when these things are in hand. Down here——"

"Jerusalem!" he cried. "Why did I plant myself here? Everything's done. The game's over. Here's Lord Eastry, and he's got everything, except what his lawyers get, and before you get any more change this way you'll have to dynamite him—and them. *He* doesn't want anything more to happen. Why should he? Any change 'u'd be a loss to him. He wants everything to burble along and burble along and go on as it's going for the next ten thousand years, Eastry after Eastry, one parson down, another come, one grocer dead, get another!

"Any one with any ideas better go away. They *have* gone away! Look at all these blessed people in this place! Look at 'em! All fast asleep, doing their business out of habit—in a sort of dream. Stuffed men would do just as well—just. They've all shook down into their places. *They* don't want anything to happen either. They're all broken in. There you are! Only what are they all alive for?

"Why can't they get a clockwork chemist?"

He concluded as he often concluded these talks. "I must invent something—that's about what I must do. Zzz. Some convenience. Something people want. Strike out. You can't think, George, of anything everybody wants and hasn't got? I mean something you

could turn out retail under a shilling, say? Well, *you* think, whenever you haven't got anything better to do. See?"

2.

So I remember my uncle in that first phase, young, but already a little fat, restless, fretful, garrulous, putting in my fermenting head all sorts of discrepant ideas. Certainly he was educational.

I remember him now as talking, always talking, in those days. He talked to me of theology, he talked of politics, of the wonders of science and the marvels of art, of the passions and the affections, of the immortality of the soul and the peculiar actions of drugs; but predominantly and constantly he talked of getting on, of enterprises, of inventions and great fortunes, of Rothschilds, silver kings, Vanderbilts, Goulds, flotations, realizations and the marvelous ways of Chance with men—in all localities that is to say, that are not absolutely sunken to the level of Cold Mutton Fat.

When I think of those early talks, I figure him always in one of three positions. Either we were in the dispensing-lair behind a high barrier, he pounding up stuff in a mortar perhaps, and I rolling pill-stuff into long rolls and cutting it up with a sort of broad-fluted knife, or he stood looking out of the shop door against the case of sponges and spray-diffusers, while I surveyed him from behind the counter, or he leaned against the little drawers behind the counter, and I hovered dusting in front.

The thought of those early days brings back to my nostrils the faint smell of scent that was always in the air, marbled now with streaks of this drug and now of that, and to my eyes the rows of jejune glass bottles with gold labels, mirror-reflected, that stood behind him.

My aunt, I remembered, used sometimes to come into the shop in a state of aggressive sprightliness, a sort of connubial ragging expedition, and get much fun over the abbreviated Latinity

of those gilt inscriptions. "Ol Amjig, George," she would read derisively, "and he pretends it's almond oil! Snap!—and that's mustard. Did you *Ever*, George?"

"Look at him, George, looking dignified. I'd like to put an old label on to *him* round the middle like his bottles are, with Ol Pondo on it. That's Latin for Impostor, George—*must* be. He'd look lovely with a stopper."

"*You* want a stopper," said my uncle, projecting his face.

My aunt, dear soul, was in those days quite thin and slender, with a delicate rosebud complexion and a disposition to connubial badinage, to a sort of gentle skylarking. There was a silvery ghost of lisp in her speech. She was a great humorist, and as the constraint of my presence at meals wore off, I became more and more aware of a filmy but extensive net of nonsense she had woven about her domestic relations until it had become the reality of her life. She affected a derisive attitude to the world at large, and applied the epithet "old" to more things than I have ever heard linked to it before or since. "Here's the old newspaper," she used to say to my uncle. "Now don't go and get it in the butter, you silly old Sardine!"

"What's the day of the week, Susan?" my uncle would ask.

"Old Monday, Sossidge," she would say, and add, "I got all my Old Washing to do. Don't I *know* it!"

She had evidently been the wit and joy of a large circle of schoolfellows, and this style had become a second nature with her. It made her very delightful to me in that quiet place. Her customary walk even had a sort of hello! in it. Her chief preoccupation in life was, I believe, to make my uncle laugh, and when by some new nickname, some new quaintness or absurdity, she achieved that end, she was, behind a mask of sober amazement the happiest woman on earth.

My uncle's laugh when it did come, I must admit, was, as Baedeker says, "rewarding." It began with gusty blowings and snortings, and opened into

a clear "Ha! ha!" but in its fullest development it included, in those youthful days, falling about anyhow and doubling up tightly, and whackings of the stomach, and tears and cries of anguish. I never in my life heard my uncle laugh to his maximum except at her; he was commonly too much in earnest for that, and he didn't laugh much at all, to my knowledge, after those early years.

Also she threw things at him to an enormous extent in her resolve to keep things lively in spite of Wimblehurst; sponges out of stock she threw, cushions, balls of paper, clean washing, bread; and once up the yard when they thought that I and the errand-boy and the diminutive maid-of-all-work were safely out of the way, she smashed a boxful of eight-ounce bottles I had left to drain, assaulting my uncle with a new soft broom. Sometimes she would shy things at me—but not often. There seemed always laughter round and about her—all three of us would share hysterics at times—and on one occasion the two of them came home from church shockingly ashamed of themselves, because of a storm of mirth during the sermon.

The vicar, it seems, had tried to blow his nose with a black glove as well as the customary pocket-handkerchief. And afterward she had picked up her own glove by the finger, and looking innocently but intently sideways, had suddenly by this simple expedient exploded my uncle altogether. We had it all over again at dinner.

"But it shows you," cried my uncle, suddenly becoming grave, "what Wimblehurst is, to have us all laughing at a little thing like that! We weren't the only ones that giggled. Not by any means! And, Lord! it *was* funny!"

Socially, my uncle and aunt were almost completely isolated. In places like Wimblehurst the tradesmen's wives always are isolated socially, all of them, unless they have a sister or a bosom friend among the other wives, but the husbands met in various bar-parlors or in the billiard-room of the Eastry Arms. But my uncle, for the most part, spent

his evenings at home. When first he arrived in Wimblehurst I think he had spread his effect of abounding ideas and enterprise rather too aggressively; and Wimblehurst, after a temporary subjugation, had rebelled and done its best to make a butt of him. His appearance in a public house led to a pause in any conversation that was going on.

"Come to tell us about everything, Mr. Ponderevo?" some one would say politely.

"You wait," my uncle used to answer, disconcerted, and sulk for the rest of his visit.

Or some one with an immense air of innocence would remark to the world generally: "They're talkin' of rebuildin' Wimblehurst all over again, I'm told. Anybody heard anything of it? Going to make it a reg'lar smart-goin', enterprisin' place—kind of Crystal Pallas."

"Earthquake and a pestilence before you get *that*," my uncle would mutter, to the infinite delight of every one, and add something inaudible about "Cold Mutton Fat."

3.

We were torn apart by a financial accident to my uncle of which I did not at first grasp the full bearings. He had developed what I regarded as an innocent intellectual recreation which he called stock-market meteorology. I think he got the idea from the use of curves in the graphic presentation of associated variations that he saw me plotting. He secured some of my square paper, and, having cast about for a time, decided to trace the rise and fall of certain mines and railways. "There's something in this, George," he said, and I little dreamed that among other things that were in it was the whole of his spare money and most of what my mother had left to him in trust for me.

"It's as plain as can be," he said. "See, here's one system of waves and here's another! These are prices for the Union Pacific—extending over a month. Now next week, mark my words, they'll be down one whole point.

We're getting near the steel part of the curve again. See? It's absolutely scientific. It's verifiable. Well, and apply it! You buy in the hollow and sell on the crest, and—there you are!"

I was so convinced of the triviality of this amusement that to find at last that he had taken it in the most disastrous earnest overwhelmed me.

He took me for a long walk to break it to me, over the hills toward Yare and across the great gorse commons by Hazelbrow.

"There are ups and downs in life, George," he said—half-across that great open space, and paused against the sky. "I left out one factor in the Union Pacific analysis."

"Did you?" I said, struck by the sudden change in his voice. "But you don't mean——"

I stopped and turned on him in the narrow sandy rut of pathway, and he stopped likewise.

"I do, George. I *do* mean. It's bust me. I'm a bankrupt here and now."

"Then——"

"The shop's bust too. I shall have to get out of that."

"And me?"

"Oh, you!—*you're* all right. You can transfer your apprenticeship, and—er—well, I'm not the sort of man to be careless of trust funds, you can be sure. I kept that aspect in mind. There's some of it left, George—trust me!—quite a decent little sum."

"But you and aunt?"

"It isn't *quite* the way we meant to leave Wimblerhurst, George; but we shall have to go. Sale; all the things shoved about and ticketed—lot a hundred and one! Ugh! It's been a lark little house in some ways. The first we had. Furnishing—a spree in its way. Very happy." His face winced at some memory. "Let's go on, George," he said shortly, near choking, I could see.

I turned my back on him, and did not look round again for a little while.

"That's how it is, you see, George," I heard him after a time.

When we were back in the highroad again he came alongside, and for a time we walked in silence.

"Don't say anything home yet," he said presently. "Fortunes of War. I got to pick the proper time with Susan—else she'll get depressed. Not that she isn't a first-rate brick, whatever comes along."

"All right," I said, "I'll be careful;" and it seemed to me for the time altogether too selfish to bother him with any further inquiries about his responsibility as my trustee. He gave a little sigh of relief at my note of assent, and was presently talking quite cheerfully of his plans. But he had, I remember, one lapse into moodiness that came and went suddenly. "Those others!" he said, as though the thought had stung him for the first time.

"What others?" I asked.

"Damn them!" said he.

"But what others?"

"All those damned stick-in-the-mud-and-die-slowly trades-people; Ruck, the butcher; Marbel, the grocer. Snape! Gord! George, *how* they'll grin!"

I thought him over in the next few weeks, and I remember now in great detail the last walk we had together before he handed over the shop and me to his successor. For he had the good luck to sell his business, "lock, stock, and barrel"—in which expression I found myself and my indentures included. The horrors of a sale by auction of the furniture even were avoided.

I remember that either coming or going on that occasion, Ruck, the butcher, stood in his doorway and regarded us with a grin that showed his long teeth.

"You half-witted hog!" said my uncle. "You grinning hyena," and then, "Pleasant day, Mr. Ruck."

"Goin' to make your fortun' in London, then?" said Mr. Ruck with slow enjoyment.

That last excursion took us along the causeway to Beeching, and so up the downs and round almost as far as Steadhurst, home. My moods, as we went, made a mingled web. By this time I had really grasped the fact that my uncle had, in plain English, robbed me; the little accumulation of my mother, six hundred pounds and more, that

would have educated me and started me in business, had been eaten into and was mostly gone into the unexpected hollow that ought to have been a crest of the Union Pacific curve, and of the remainder he still gave no account.

I was too young and inexperienced to insist on this or know how to get it, but the thought of it all made streaks of decidedly black anger in that scheme of interwoven feelings. And you know I was also acutely sorry for him—almost as sorry as I was for my aunt Susan. Even then I had quite found him out. I knew him to be weaker than myself; his incurable, irresponsible childishness was as clear to me then as it was on his death-bed, his redeeming and excusing imaginative silliness. Through some odd mental twist perhaps I was disposed to exonerate him even at the cost of blaming my poor old mother who had left things in his untrustworthy hands.

I should have forgiven him altogether, I believe, if he had been in any manner apologetic to me; but he wasn't that. He kept reassuring me in a way I found irritating. Mostly, however, his solicitude was for Aunt Susan and himself.

"It's these Crises, George," he said, "try Character. Your aunt's come out well, my boy."

He made meditative noises for a space.

"Had her cry, of course"—the thing had been only too painfully evident to me in her eyes and swollen face—"who wouldn't? But now—buoyant again! She's a Corker.

"We'll be sorry to leave the little house, of course. It's a bit like Adam and Eve, you know. Lord! what a chap old Milton was!

"The world was all before them, where to
choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their
guide."

Providence their guide. Well, thank goodness there's no imeedgit prospect of either Cain or Abel!

"After all, it won't be so bad up there. Not the scenery, perhaps, or the air we get here, but—*Life!* We've got

very comfortable little rooms, very comfortable considering, and I shall rise. We're not done yet, we're not beaten; don't think that, George. I shall pay twenty shillings on the pound before I've done—you mark my words, George—twenty-five to you. I got this situation within twenty-four hours—others offered. It's an important firm—one of the best in London. I looked to that. I might have got four or five shillings a week more—elsewhere. Quarters I could name. But I said to them plainly wages to go on with, but opportunity's my game—development. We understood each other."

He threw out his chest, and the little round eyes behind his glasses rested valiantly on imaginary employers.

We would go on in silence for a space while he revised and restated that encounter. Then he would break out abruptly with some banal phrase.

"The Battle of Life, George, my boy," he would cry, or, "Ups and Downs!"

He ignored or waived the poor little attempts I made to ascertain my own position. "That's all right," he would say; or, "Leave that to me. I'll look after that." And he would drift away toward the philosophy and moral of the situation. What was I to do?

"Never put all your resources into one chance, George; that's the lesson I draw from this. Have forces in reserve. It was a hundred to one, George, that I was right—a hundred to one. I worked it out afterward. And here we are spiked on the off chance. If I'd only have kept back a little, I'd have had it on U. P. next day, like a shot, and come out on the rise. There you are!"

His thoughts took a graver turn.

"It's a lesson to me. You start in to get a hundred per cent. and you come out with that. It means, in a way, a reproof for Pride. I've thought of that, George—in the Night Watches. I was thinking this morning, when I was shaving, that that's where the good of it all comes in. At bottom I'm a mystic in these affairs. You calculate you're going to do this or that, but at

bottom who knows at all *what* he's doing? When you most think you're doing things, they're being done right over your head. *You're* being done—in a sense. Take a hundred-to-one chance, or one-to-a-hundred—what does it matter? You're being Led."

It's odd that I heard this at the time with unutterable contempt, and now that I recall it—well, I ask myself, what have I got better?

"I wish," said I, becoming for a moment outrageous, "*you* were being Led to give me some account of my money, uncle."

"Not without a bit of paper to figure on, George, I can't. But you trust me about that, never fear. You trust me."

And in the end I had to.

I think the bankruptcy hit my aunt pretty hard. There was, so far as I can remember now, a complete cessation of all those cheerful outbreaks of elasticity—no more skylarking in the shop nor scampering about the house. But there was no fuss that I saw, and only little signs in her complexion of the fits of weeping that must have taken her. She didn't cry at the end, though to me her face with its strain of self-possession was more pathetic than any weeping.

"Well," she said to me as she came through the shop to the cab, "here's old orf, George! Orf to Home number two! Good-by!" And she took me in her arms and kissed me and pressed me to her. Then she dived straight for the cab before I could answer her.

My uncle followed, and he seemed to me a trifle too valiant and confident in his bearing for reality. He was unusually white in the face. He spoke to his successor at the counter. "Here we go!" he said. "One down, the other up. You'll find it a quiet little business so long as you run it on quiet lines—a nice, quiet little business. There's nothing more? No? Well, if you want to know anything, write to me. I'll always explain fully. Anything—business, place, or people. You'll find Pil Antibil a little overstocked, by the by. I found it soothed my mind the day

before yesterday making 'em, and I made 'em all day. Thousands! And where's George? Ah! there you are! I'll write to you, George, *fully*, about all that affair. *Fully*."

It became clear to me as if for the first time, that I was really parting from my aunt Susan. I went out onto the pavement and saw her head craned forward, her wide-open blue eyes and her little face intent on the shop that had combined for her all the charms of a big doll's house and a little home of her very own.

"Good-by!" she said to it and to me. Our eyes met for a moment—perplexed. My uncle bustled out and gave a few totally unnecessary directions to the cabman and got in beside her.

"All right?" asked the driver. "Right," said I; and he woke up the horse with a flick of his whip. My aunt's eyes surveyed me again. "Stick to your old science and things, George, and write and tell me when they make you a professor," she said cheerfully.

She stared at me for a second longer with eyes growing wider and brighter and a smile that had become fixed, glanced again at the bright little shop still saying "Ponderevo" with all the emphasis of its fascia, and then flopped back hastily out of sight of me into the recesses of the cab. Then it had gone from before me, and I beheld Mr. Snape the hairdresser inside his shop regarding its departure with a quiet satisfaction and exchanging smiles and significant headshakes with Mr. Marbel.

4.

I was left, I say, as part of the lock, stock, and barrel, at Wimblehurst with my new master, a Mr. Mantell; who plays no part in the progress of this story except in so far as he effaced my uncle's traces. So soon as the freshness of this new personality faded, I began to find Wimblehurst not only a dull but a lonely place, and to miss my aunt Susan immensely.

I threw myself into my studies. I was soon beyond the small requirements of the Pharmaceutical Society's

examination, and as they do not permit candidates to sit for that until one and twenty, I was presently filling up my time and preventing my studies becoming too desultory by making an attack upon the London University degree of Bachelor of Science, which impressed me then as a very splendid but almost impossible achievement.

The degree in mathematics and chemistry appealed to me as particularly congenial—albeit giddily inaccessible. I set to work. I had presently to arrange a holiday and go to London to matriculate, and so it was I came upon my aunt and uncle again. In many ways that visit marked an epoch. It was my first impression of London at all. I was then nineteen, and by a conspiracy of chances my nearest approach to that human wilderness had been a brief visit to Chatham. Chatham too had been my largest town. So that I got London at last with an exceptional freshness of effect, as the sudden revelation of a whole unsuspected other side to life.

I came to it on a dull and smoky day by the Southeastern Railway, and our train was half an hour late, stopping and going on and stopping again. I marked beyond Chislehurst the growing multitude of villas, and so came stage by stage through multiplying houses and diminishing interspaces of market garden and dingy grass to regions of interlacing railway lines, big factories, gasometers and wide-reeking swamps of dingy little homes, more of them and more and more. The number of these and their dinginess and poverty increased, and here rose a great public house and here a Board School and here a gaunt factory; and away to the east there loomed for a time a queer incongruous forest of masts and spars.

The congestion of houses intensified and piled up presently into tenements; I marveled more and more at this boundless world of dingy people; whiffs of industrial smell, of leather, of brewing, drifted into the carriage, the sky darkened, I rumbled thunderously over bridges, van-crowded streets peered

down on and crossed the Thames with an abrupt *éclat* of sound.

I got an effect of tall warehouses, of gray water, barge-crowded, of broad banks of indescribable mud, and then I was in Cannon Street Station—a monstrous dirty cavern with trains packed across its vast floor and more porters standing along the platform than I had ever seen in my life before. I alighted with my portmanteau and struggled along, realizing for the first time just how small and weak I could still upon occasion feel. In this world, I felt, an honors medal in electricity and magnetism counted for nothing at all.

Afterward I drove in a cab down a cañon of rushing street between high warehouses, and peeped up astonished at the blackened grays of Saint Paul's. The traffic of Cheapside—it was mostly in horse omnibuses in those days—seemed stupendous, its roar was stupendous; I wondered where the money came from to employ so many cabs, what industry could support the endless jostling stream of silk-hatted, frock-coated, hurrying men. Down a turning I found the Temperance Hotel Mr. Mantell had recommended to me. The porter in a green uniform who took over my portmanteau seemed, I thought, to despise me a good deal.

5.

Matriculation kept me for four full days, and then came an afternoon to spare, and I sought out Tottenham Court Road through a perplexing network of various and crowded streets. But this London was vast! it was endless! it seemed the whole world had changed into packed frontages and hoardings and street spaces.

I got there at last and made inquiries, and I found my uncle behind the counter of the pharmacy he managed, an establishment that did not impress me as doing a particularly high-class trade. "Lord!" he said at the sight of me, "I was wanting something to happen!"

He greeted me warmly. I had grown taller and he, I thought, had

grown shorter and smaller and rounder, but otherwise he was unchanged. He struck me as being rather shabby, and the silk hat he produced and put on, when, after mysterious negotiations in the back premises, he achieved his freedom to accompany me, was past its first youth; but he was as buoyant and confident as ever.

"Come to ask me about all *that*?" he cried. "I've never written yet."

"Oh! among other things," said I with a sudden regrettable politeness, and waived the topic of his trusteeship to ask after my aunt Susan.

"We'll have her out of it," he said suddenly; "we'll go somewhere. We don't get you in London every day."

"It's my first visit," I said; "I've never seen London before." And that made him ask me what I thought of it, and the rest of the talk was London, London, to the exclusion of all smaller topics. He took me up the Hampstead Road almost to the Cobden statue, plunged into some back streets to the left, and came at last to a blistered front door that responded to his latch-key, one of a long series of blistered front doors with fanlights and apartment cards above.

We found ourselves in a drab-colored passage that was not only narrow and dirty but desolately empty, and then he opened a door and revealed my aunt sitting at the window, with a little sewing-machine on a bamboo occasional table before her, and "work"—a plum-colored walking-dress I judged at its most analytical stage—scattered over the rest of the apartment.

At the first glance I judged my aunt was plumper than she had been, but her complexion was just as fresh and her China blue eye as bright as in the old days.

London, she said, didn't "get blacks" on her.

She still "cheeked" my uncle, I was pleased to find. "What are you old Poking in for at *this* time—*Gubbitt*?" she said, when he appeared, and she still looked with a practised eye for the facetious side of things. When she saw me behind him, she gave a little

cry and stood up radiant. Then she became grave.

I was surprised at my own emotion in seeing her. She held me at arm's length for a moment, a hand on each shoulder, and looked at me with a sort of glad scrutiny. She seemed to hesitate, and then pecked a little kiss off my cheek.

"You're a man, George," she said, as she released me, and continued to look at me for a while.

Their *ménage* was one of a very common type in London. They occupied what is called the dining-room floor of a small house, and they had the use of a little inconvenient kitchen in the basement that had once been a scullery. The two rooms, bedroom behind and living-room in front, were separated by folding doors that were never now thrown back, and indeed, in the presence of a visitor, not used at all. There was of course no bathroom or anything of that sort available, and there was no water supply except to the kitchen below.

My aunt did all the domestic work, though she could have afforded to pay for help if the build of the place had not rendered that inconvenient to the pitch of impossibility. There was no sort of help available except that of indoor servants, for whom she had no accommodation. The furniture was their own; it was partly second-hand, but on the whole it seemed cheerful to my eye, and my aunt's bias for cheap, gay-figured muslin had found ample scope. In many ways I should think it must have been an extremely inconvenient and cramped sort of home, but at the time I took it, as I was taking everything, as being there and in the nature of things.

I did not see the oddness of solvent, decent people living in a habitation so clearly neither designed nor adapted for their needs, so wasteful of labor and so devoid of beauty as this was, and it is only now as I describe this that I find myself thinking of the essential absurdity of an intelligent community living in such makeshift homes. It strikes me now as the next thing to wearing second-hand clothes.

I remember now that a poor gray-haired old woman, who had an air of having been roused from a nap in the dust-bin, came out into the area and looked up at us as we three went out from the front door to "see London" under my uncle's direction. She was the sub-letting occupier, she squeezed out a precarious living by taking the house whole and sub-letting it in detail, and she made her food and got the shelter of an attic above and a basement below by the transaction. And if she didn't chance to "let" steadily, out she went to pauperdom, and some other poor sordid old adventurer tried in her place.

6.

It pleased my uncle extremely to find I had never seen London before. He took possession of the metropolis forthwith. "London, George," he said, "takes a lot of understanding. It's a great place. Immense. The richest town in the world, the biggest port, the greatest manufacturing town, the Imperial city—the center of civilization, the heart of the world! See those sandwich men down there! That third one's hat! Fair treat! You don't see poverty like that in Wimblehurst, George! And many of them high Oxford honor men, too. Brought down by drink! It's a wonderful place, George—a whirlpool, a maelstrom!"

I have a very confused memory of that afternoon's inspection of London. My uncle took us to and fro, showing us over his London, talking erratically, following a route of his own. Sometimes we were walking, sometimes we were on the tops of great staggering horse omnibuses in a heaving jumble of traffic, and at one point we had tea in an Aerated Bread Shop. But I remember very distinctly how we passed down Park Lane under an overcast sky, and how my uncle pointed out the house of this child of good fortune and that with succulent appreciation.

I remember, too, that as he talked I would find my aunt watching my face as if to check the soundness of his talk by my expression.

"Been in love yet, George?" she asked suddenly, over a bun in the tea-shop.

"Too busy, aunt," I told her.

She bit her bun extensively, and gesticulated with the remnant to indicate that she had more to say.

"How are *you* going to make your fortune?" she said so soon as she could speak again. "You haven't told us that."

"Lectricity," said my uncle, taking breath after a deep draft of tea.

"If I make it at all," I said. "For my part, I think I shall be satisfied with something less than a fortune."

"We're going to make ours—suddenly," she said. "So *he* old says." She jerked her head at my uncle. "He won't tell me when—so I can't get anything ready. But it's coming. Going to ride in our carriage and have a garden. Garden—like a bishop's."

She finished her bun and twiddled crumbs from her fingers. "I shall be glad of the garden," she said. "It's going to be a real big one, with roseries and things. Fountains in it. Pampas grass. Hothouses."

"You'll get it all right," said my uncle, who had reddened a little.

"Gray horses in the carriage, George," she said. "It's nice to think about when one's dull. And dinners in restaurants often and often. And theaters—in the stalls. And money and money and money."

"You may joke," said my uncle, and hummed for a moment.

"Just as though an old Porpoise like him would ever make money," she said, turning her eyes upon his profile with a sudden lapse to affection. "He'll just porpoise about."

"I'll do something," said my uncle, "you bet! Zzz!" and rapped with a shilling on the marble table.

"When you do, you'll have to buy me a new pair of gloves," she said, "anyhow. That finger's past mending. Look! you Cabbage—you!" And she held the split under his nose, and pulled a face of comical fierceness.

My uncle smiled at these sallies at the time, but afterward, when I went back with him to the pharmacy—the

low-class business grew brisker in the evening and they kept open late—he reverted to it in a low expository tone. “Your aunt’s a bit impatient, George. She gets at me. It’s only natural. A woman doesn’t understand how long it takes to build up a position. No. In certain directions now—I am—quietly—building up a position. Now here. I get this room. I have my three assistants. Zzz. It’s a position that, judged by the criterion of immediate income, isn’t perhaps so good as I deserve, but strategically—yes. It’s what I want. I make my plans. I rally my attack.”

“What plans,” I said, “are you making?”

“Well, George, there’s one thing you can rely upon. I’m doing nothing in a hurry. I turn over this idea and that, and I don’t talk—indiscreetly. That’s— No! I don’t think I can tell you that. And yet, why *not*?”

He got up and closed the door into the shop. “I’ve told no one,” he remarked, as he sat down again. “I owe you something.”

His face flushed slightly, he leaned forward over the little table toward me.

“Listen!” he said.

I listened.

“*Tono-Bungay*,” said my uncle very slowly and distinctly.

I thought he was asking me to hear some remote, strange noise. “I don’t hear anything,” I said reluctantly to his expectant face.

He smiled undefeated. “Try again,” he said, and repeated, “*Tono-Bungay*.”

“Oh, *that*!” I said.

“Eh?” said he.

“But what is it?”

“Ah!” said my uncle, rejoicing and expanding. “What is it? That’s what you got to ask. What *won’t* it be?” He dug me violently in what he supposed to be my ribs. “George,” he cried—“George, watch this place! There’s more to follow.”

And that was all I could get from him.

That, I believe, was the very first time that the word *Tono-Bungay* was heard on earth—unless my uncle indulged in monologues in his chamber—

a highly probable thing. Its utterance certainly did not seem to me at the time to mark any sort of epoch, and had I been told this word was the open sesame to whatever pride and pleasure the grimy front of London hid from us that evening, I should have laughed aloud.

“Coming now to business,” I said after a pause, and with a chill sense of effort; and I opened the question of his trust.

My uncle sighed, and leaned back in his chair. “I wish I could make all this business as clear to you as it is to me,” he said. “However— Go on! Say what you have to say.” He listened. That was all. When I got back to *Wimblehurst* I allowed myself to write him a boyishly sarcastic and sincerely bitter letter. He never replied. Then I set myself far more grimly and resolutely to my studies than I had ever done before.

7.

I came to live in London when I was nearly twenty-two. *Wimblehurst* dwindles in perspective, is now in this book a little place far off, *Bladesover* no more than a small pinkish speck of frontage among the distant Kentish hills; the scene broadens out, becomes multitudinous and limitless, full of the sense of vast irrelevant movement. I do not remember my second coming to London as I do my first, nor my early impressions, save that an October memory of softened amber sunshine stands out, amber sunshine falling on gray house fronts, I know not where. That, and a sense of a large tranquillity.

I had come to London as a scholar. I had taken the Vincent Bradley scholarship of the Pharmaceutical Society, but I threw this up when I found that my work of the science and art department in mathematics, physics and chemistry had given me one of the minor Technical Board scholarships at the Consolidated Technical Schools at South Kensington. The latter seemed to lead toward engineering, in which I imagined—I imagine to this day—my particular use is to be found.

I came to London in late September, and it was a very different London from that great, grayly overcast, smoke-stained house-wilderness of my first impressions. I reached it by Victoria and not by Cannon Street, and its center was now in Exhibition Road. It shone, pale amber, blue-gray and tenderly spacious and fine under clear autumnal skies, a London of hugely handsome buildings and vistas and distances, a London of gardens and labyrinths, tall museums, of old trees and remote palaces and artificial waters. I lodged near-by in West Brompton at a house in a little square.

So London faced me the second time, making me forget altogether for a while the gray, drizzling city visage that had first looked upon me. I settled down and went to and fro to my lectures and laboratory; in the beginning I worked hard, and only slowly did the curiosity that presently possessed me to know more of this huge urban province arise, the desire to find something beyond mechanism that I could serve, some use other than learning.

With this was a growing sense of loneliness, a desire for adventure and intercourse. I found myself in the evenings poring over a map of London I had bought, instead of copying out lecture notes—and on Sundays I made explorations, taking omnibus rides east and west and north and south, and so enlarging and broadening the sense of great swarming hinterlands of humanity with whom I had no dealings, of whom I knew nothing.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAWN COMES, AND MY UNCLE AP-
PEARS IN A NEW SILK HAT.

I.

Throughout my student days I had not seen my uncle. I sent him another hostile note, but I refrained from going to him in spite of an occasional regret that in this way I estranged myself from my aunt Susan, and I maintained a sulky attitude of mind toward him. And I don't think that once in all

that time I gave a thought to that mystic word of his that was to alter all the world for us. Yet I had not altogether forgotten it. It was with a touch of memory, dim, transient perplexity if no more—why did this thing seem in some way personal?—that I read a new inscription upon the hoardings:

THE SECRET OF VIGOR TONO-BUNGAY

That was all. It was simple and yet in some way arresting. I found myself repeating the word after I had passed, it roused one's attention like the sound of distant guns. "Tono"—what's that? and deep, rich, unhurrying: "*Bun-gay!*"

Then came my uncle's amazing telegram, his answer to my note: "*Come to me at once you are wanted three hundred a year certain tono-bungay.*"

"By Jove!" I cried, "of course!"

"It's something—a patent medicine! I wonder what he wants with me."

In his Napoleonic way my uncle had omitted to give an address. His telegram had been handed in at Farringdon Road, and after complex meditations I replied to Ponderevo, Farringdon Road, trusting to the rarity of our surname to reach him.

"Where are you?" I asked.

His reply came promptly:

"192A, Raggett Street, E. C."

The next day I took an unsanctioned holiday after the morning's lecture. I discovered my uncle in a wonderfully new silk hat—oh, a splendid hat! with a rolling brim that went beyond the common fashion. It was decidedly too big for him—that was its only fault. It was stuck on the back of his head, and he was in a white waistcoat and shirt-sleeves. He welcomed me with a forgetfulness of my bitter satire and my hostile abstinence that was almost divine. His glasses fell off at the sight of me. His round inexpressive eyes shone brightly. He held out his plump short hand.

"Here we are, George! What did I tell you? Needn't whisper it now, my boy. Shout it—*loud!* Spread it about! Tell every one! Tono—TONO—TONO-BUNGAY!"

Raggett Street, you must understand, was a thoroughfare over which some one had distributed large quantities of cabbage stumps and leaves. It opened out of the upper end of Farringdon Road, and 192A was a shop with the plate-glass front colored chocolate, on which several of the same bills I had read upon the hoardings had been stuck.

The floor was covered by street mud that had been brought in on dirty boots, and three energetic young men of the hooligan type, in neck-wraps and caps, were packing wooden cases with papered-up bottles, amidst much straw and confusion, the counter was littered with these same swathed bottles, of a pattern then novel but now amazingly familiar in the world, the blue paper with the coruscating figure of a genially nude giant, and the printed directions of how under practically all circumstances to take Tono-Bungay.

Beyond the counter on one side opened a staircase down which I seem to remember a girl descending with a further consignment of bottles, and the rest of the background was a high partition, also chocolate, with "Temporary Laboratory" inscribed upon it in white letters, and over a door that pierced it, "Office."

Here I rapped, inaudible amid much hammering, and then entered unanswered to find my uncle, dressed as I have described, one hand gripping a sheath of letters, and the other scratching his head as he dictated to one of three toiling typewriter-girls. Behind him was a further partition and a door inscribed "ABSOLUTELY PRIVATE—NO ADMISSION" thereon. This partition was of wood painted the universal chocolate, up to about eight feet from the ground and then of glass.

Through the glass I saw dimly a crowded suggestion of crucibles and glass retorts, and—by Jove! yes!—the dear old Wimblehurst air-pump still! It gave me quite a little thrill—that air-pump! And beside it was the electrical machine—but something—some serious trouble—had happened to that. All these were evidently placed for show.

"Come right into the sanctum," said my uncle, after he had finished something about "esteemed consideration," and whisked me through the door into a room that quite amazingly failed to verify the promise of that apparatus. It was papered with dingy wall-paper that had peeled in places; it contained a fireplace, an easy chair with a cushion, a table on which stood two or three big bottles, a number of cigar-boxes on the mantel, a whisky Tantalus and a row of soda-siphons. He shut the door after me carefully.

"Well, here we are!" he said. "Going strong! Have a whisky, George? No! Wise man! Neither will I! You see me at it! At it—hard!"

"Hard at what?"

"Read it," and he thrust into my hand a label—that label that has now become one of the most familiar objects of the chemist's shop, the greenish-blue rather old-fashioned bordering, the legend, the name in good black type, very clear, and the strong man all set about with lightning flashes above the double column of skilful lies in red—the label of Tono-Bungay, "It's afloat!" And suddenly he burst out singing in that throaty tenor of his:

"I'm afloat, I'm afloat on the fierce flowing
tide,
The ocean's my home and my bark is my
bride!

"Ripping song that is, George. Not so much a bark as a solution, but still—it does! Here we are at it! By the by! Half a mo'! I've thought of a thing." He whisked out, leaving me to examine this unclear spot at leisure, while his voice became dictatorial without. The den struck me as in its large gray dirty way quite unprecedented and extraordinary. The bottles were all labeled simply A, B, C, and so forth, and that dear old apparatus above, seen from this side, was even more patently "on the shelf" than when it had been used to impress Wimblehurst.

I saw nothing for it but to sit down in the chair and await my uncle's explanations. I remarked a frock-coat with satin lapels behind the door; there was a dignified umbrella in the corner

and a clothes-brush and a hat-brush stood on a side-table. My uncle returned in five minutes, looking at his watch—a gold watch. "Gettin' lunch-time, George," he said. "You'd better come and have lunch with me."

"How's Aunt Susan?" I asked.

"Exuberant. Never saw her so larky. This has bucked her up something wonderful—all this."

"All what?"

"Tono-Bungay."

"What is Tono-Bungay?" I asked.

My uncle hesitated. "Tell you after lunch, George," he said. "Come along!" and having locked up the sanctum after himself, led the way along a narrow dirty pavement, lined with barrows and swept at times by avalanchelike porters bearing burdens to vans, to Farringdon Road. He hailed a passig cab superbly, and the cabman was infinitely respectful. "Schäfer's," he said, and off we went side by side—and with me more and more amazed at all these things—to Schäfer's Hotel, the second of the two big places with huge lace-curtain-covered windows, near the corner of Blackfriars Bridge.

2.

I will confess I felt a magic change in our relative proportions as the two colossal, pale-blue-and-red-liveried porters of Schäfer's held open the inner doors for us with a respectful salutation that in some manner they seemed to confine wholly to my uncle. Instead of being about four inches taller, I felt at least the same size as he, and very much slenderer. Still more respectful waiters relieved him of the new hat and the dignified umbrella, and took his orders for our lunch. He gave them with a fine assurance.

He nodded to several of the waiters.

"They know me, George, already," he said. "Point me out. Live place! Eye for coming men!"

The detailed business of the lunch engaged our attention for a while, and then I leaned across my plate. "And now?" said I.

"It's the secret of vigor. Didn't you read that label?"

"Yes, but——"

"It's selling like hot cakes."

"And what is it?" I pressed.

"Well," said my uncle, and then leaned forward and spoke softly under cover of his hand, "it's nothing more or less than——"

But here an unfortunate scruple intervenes. After all, Tono-Bungay is still a marketable commodity, and in the hands of purchasers, who bought it from—among other vendors—me. No! I am afraid I cannot give it away.

"You see," said my uncle in a slow, confidential whisper, with eyes very wide and a creased forehead, "it's nice because of the"—here he mentioned a flavoring matter and an aromatic spirit—"it's stimulating because of"—here he mentioned two very vivid tonics, one with a marked action on the kidney. "And the"—here he mentioned two other ingredients—"make it pretty intoxicating. Cocks their tails. Then there's"—but I touch on the essential secret. "And there you are! I got it out of an old book of recipes—all except the"—here he mentioned the more virulent substance, the one that assails the kidneys—"which is my idea. Modern touch! There you are!"

He reverted to the direction of our lunch.

Presently he was leading the way to the lounge—a sumptuous place in red morocco and yellow glazed crockery, with incredible vistas of settees and sofas and things, and there I found myself grouped with him in two excessively upholstered chairs with an earthenware Moorish table between us bearing coffee and Benedictine, and I was tasting the delights of a ten-penny cigar. My uncle smoked a similar cigar in an habituated manner, and he looked energetic and knowing and luxurious and most unexpectedly a little boulder, round the end of it.

It was just a trivial flaw upon our swagger, perhaps, that we both were clear our cigars had to be "mild." He got obliquely across the spaces of his great armchair so as to incline confidentially to my ear, he curled up his little legs, and I, in my longer way,

adopted a corresponding receptive obliquity. I felt that we should strike an unbiased observer as a couple of very deep and wily and developing and repulsive persons.

"I want to let you into this"—puff—"George," said my uncle round the end of his cigar. "For many reasons."

His voice grew lower and more cunning. He made explanations that to my inexperience did not completely explain. I retain an impression of a long credit and a share with a firm of wholesale chemists, of a credit and a prospective share with some pirate printers, of a third share for a leading magazine and newspaper proprietor.

"I played 'em off one against the other," said my uncle. I took his point in an instant. He had gone to each of them in turn and said the others had come in.

"I put up four hundred pounds," said my uncle, "myself and my all. And you know——"

He assumed a brisk confidence. "I hadn't five hundred pence. At——"

For a moment he really was just a little embarrassed. "I *did*," he said, "produce capital. You see, there was that trust affair of yours—I ought, I suppose—in strict legality—to have put that straight first. Zzzz.

"It was a bold thing to do," said my uncle, shifting the venue from the region of honor to the region of courage. And then, with a characteristic outburst of piety, "Thank God, it's all come right!"

"And now, I suppose, you ask where do *you* come in? Well, fact is, I've always believed in you, George. You've got—it's a sort of dismal grit. Bark your shins, rouse you, and you'll go! You'd rush any position you had a mind to rush. I know a bit about character, George—trust me. You've got——" He clenched his hands and thrust them out suddenly, and at the same time said, with explosive violence, "Wooosh! Yes. You have! The way you put away that Latin at Wimblehurst; I've never forgotten it. Woo-oo-oo-osh! Your science and all that! Woo-ooosh!"

"I know my limitations. There's things I can do, and"—he spoke in a whisper, as though this was the first hint of his life's secret—"there's things I can't. Well, I can create this business, but I can't make it go. I'm too voluminous—I'm a boiler over, not a simmering stick-at-it. *You* keep on *hotting up and hotting up*. Papin's digester. That's you, steady and long and piling up—then, woo-oo-oo-osh.

"Come in and stiffen these niggers. Teach them that woo-oo-oo-osh. There you are! That's what I'm after. You! Nobody else believes you're more than a boy. Come right in with me and be a man. Eh, George? Think of the fun of it—a thing on the go—a Real Live Thing! Wooshing it up! Making it buzz and spin! Whoo-oo-oo." He made alluring expanding circles in the air with his hand. "Eh?"

His proposal, sinking to confidential undertones again, took more definite shape. I was to give all my time and energy to developing and organizing. "You sha'n't write a single advertisement, or give a single assurance," he declared. "I can do all that." And the telegram was no flourish; I was to have three hundred a year. Three hundred a year. "That's nothing," said my uncle, "the thing to freeze on to, when the time comes, is your tenth of the vendor's share."

Three hundred a year certain, anyhow! It was an enormous income to me. For a moment I was altogether staggered. Could there be that much money in the whole concern? I looked about me at the sumptuous furniture of Schäfer's Hotel. No doubt there were many such incomes.

My head was spinning with unwonted Benedictine and Burgundy.

"Let me go back and look at the game again," I said. "Let me see upstairs and round about."

I did.

"What do you think of it all?" my uncle asked at last.

"Well, for one thing," I said, "why don't you have those girls working in a decently ventilated room? Apart from any other considerations, they'd work

twice as briskly. And they ought to cover the corks before labeling round the bottle——"

"Why?" said my uncle.

"Because—they sometimes make a mucker of the cork job, and then the label's wasted."

"Come and change it, George," said my uncle with sudden fervor. "Come here and make a machine of it. You can. Make it all slick, and then make it woosh. I know you can. Oh! I know you can."

I seem to remember very quick changes of mind after that lunch. The muzzy exaltation of the unaccustomed stimulants gave way very rapidly to a mood of pellucid and impartial clairvoyance which is one of my habitual mental states. It is intermittent; it leaves me for weeks together, I know, but back it comes at last like justice on circuit, and calls up all my impressions, all my illusions, all my wilful and passionate proceedings.

We came down-stairs again into that inner room which pretended to be a scientific laboratory through its high glass lights, and indeed was a lurking-place. My uncle pressed a cigarette on me, and I took it, and stood before the empty fireplace while he propped his umbrella in the corner, deposited the new silk hat that was a little too big for him on a table, blew copiously and produced a second cigar.

It came into my head that he had shrunk very much in size since the Wimbleshurst days, that the cannon-ball he had swallowed was rather more evident and shameless than it had been, his skin less fresh and the nose between his glasses, which still didn't quite fit, much redder. And just then he seemed much laxer in his muscles and not quite as alertly quick in his movements. But he evidently wasn't aware of the degenerative nature of his changes as he sat there, looking suddenly quite little under my eyes.

"Well, George!" he said, quite happily unconscious of my silent criticism, "what do you think of it all?"

"Well," I said, "in the first place—it's a damned swindle."

"Tut! tut!" said my uncle. "It's as straight as—— It's fair trading."

"So much the worse for trading," I said.

"It's the sort of thing everybody does. After all, there's no harm in the stuff—and it may do good. It might do a lot of good—giving people confidence, f'r instance, against an epidemic. See? Why not? I don't see where your swindle comes in."

"H'm," I said. "It's a thing you either see or don't see."

"I'd like to know what sort of trading isn't a swindle in its way. Everybody who does a large advertised trade is selling something common on the strength of saying it's uncommon. Look at Chickson—they made him a baronet. Look at Lord Radmore, who did it on lying about the alkali in soap! Rippin' ads those were of his, too!"

"You don't mean to say you think doing this stuff up in bottles and swearing it's the quintessence of strength and making poor devils buy it at that, is straight?"

"Why not, George? How do we know it mayn't be the quintessence to them so far as they're concerned?"

"Oh!" I said, and shrugged my shoulders.

"There's Faith. You put Faith in 'em. I grant our labels are a bit emphatic. Christian Science, really. No good setting people against the medicine. Tell me a solitary trade nowadays that hasn't to be—emphatic. It's the modern way. Everybody understands it—everybody allows for it."

"But the world would be no worse and rather better, if all this stuff of yours was run down a conduit into the Thames."

"Don't see that, George, at all. 'Mong other things, all our people would be out of work. Unemployed! I grant you Tono-Bungay *may* be—not *quite* so good a find for the world as Peruvian bark, but the point is, George—it *makes trade*! And the world lives on trade. Commerce! A romantic exchange of commodities and property. Romance. 'Magination. See? You must look at these things in a broad

light. Look at the wood—and forget the trees! And hang it, George! we got to do these things! There's no way unless you do. What do *you* mean to do—anyhow?"

"There's ways of living," I said, "without either fraud or lying."

"You're a bit stiff, George. There's no fraud in this affair, I'll bet my hat! But what do you propose to do? Go as chemist to some one who *is* running a business, and draw a salary without a share like I offer you? Much sense in that! It comes out of the swindle—as you call it—just the same."

"Some businesses are straight and quiet, anyhow; supply a sound article that is really needed, don't shout advertisements."

"No, George. There you're behind the times. The last of that sort was sold up 'bout five years ago."

"Well, there's scientific research."

"And who pays for that? Who put up that big City and Guilds place at South Kensington? Enterprising business men! They fancy they'll have a bit of science going on, they want a handy expert ever and again, and there you are! And what do you get for research when you've done it? Just a bare living, and no outlook. They just keep you to make discoveries, and if they fancy they'll use 'em they do."

"One can teach."

"How much a year, George? How much a year? I suppose you must respect Carlyle. Well—you take Carlyle's test—solvency.—Lord! what a book that 'French Revolution' of his is!—See what the world pays teachers and discoverers, and what it pays business men! That shows the ones it really wants. There's a justice in these big things, George, over and above the apparent injustice. I tell you it wants trade. It's Trade that makes the world go round! Argosies! Venice! Empire!"

My uncle suddenly rose to his feet.

"You think it over, George. You think it over! And come up on Sunday to the new place—we got rooms in Gower Street now—and see your aunt. She's often asked for you,

George—often and often, and thrown it up at me about that bit of property—though I've always said and always will, that twenty-five shillings on the pound is what I'll pay you and interest up to the nail. And think it over. It isn't me I ask you to help. It's yourself. It's your aunt Susan. It's the whole concern. It's the commerce of your country. And we want you badly. I tell you straight, I know my limitations. You could take this place, you could make it go. I can see you at it—looking rather sour. Woosh is the word, George."

And he smiled endearingly.

"I got to dictate a letter," he said, ending the smile and vanished into the outer room.

3.

I didn't succumb without a struggle to my uncle's allurements. Indeed, I held out for a week while I contemplated life and my prospects. It was a crowded and muddled contemplation. It invaded even my sleep.

I consulted my only friend in London, my old schoolfellow Ewart, who had now become an artist of sorts.

Ewart as a moral influence was unsatisfactory. I had made up my mind to put the whole thing before him, partly to see how he took it, and partly to hear how it sounded when it was said. I asked him to come and eat with me in an Italian place near Panton Street where one could get a curious, interesting, glutting sort of dinner for eighteen pence. He came with a disconcerting black eye that he wouldn't explain. "Not so much a black eye," he said, "as the aftermath of a purple patch. What's your difficulty?"

"I'll tell you with the salad," I said.

But as a matter of fact I didn't tell him. I threw out that I was doubtful whether I ought to go into trade, or stick to teaching in view of my deepening socialist proclivities; and he, warming with the unaccustomed generosity of a sixteen-penny Chianti, ran on from that without any further inquiry as to my trouble.

His utterances roved wide and loose.

"The reality of life, my dear Ponderevo," I remember him saying very impressively and punctuating with the nut-crackers as he spoke, "is Chromatic Conflict—and Form. Get hold of that and let all these other questions go. The socialist will tell you one sort of color and shape is right, the individualist another. What does it all amount to? What *does* it all amount to? *Nothing!* I have no advice to give any one, none—except to avoid regrets. Be yourself—seek after such beautiful things as your own sense determines to be beautiful. And don't mind the headache in the morning. For what, after all, is a morning, Ponderevo? It isn't like the upper part of a day!"

He paused impressively.

"What rot!" I cried, after a confused attempt to apprehend him.

"Isn't it! And it's my bed-rock wisdom in the matter! Take it or leave it." He put down the nut-crackers out of my reach and lugged a greasy-looking note-book from his pocket. "I'm going to steal this mustard-pot," he said.

I made noises of remonstrance.

"Only as a matter of design. I've got to do an old beast's tomb. Wholesale grocer. I'll put it on his corners—four mustard-pots. I dare say he'd be glad of a mustard-plaster now to cool him, poor devil, where he is. But anyhow—here goes!"

4.

At last I went to the address my uncle had given me in Gower Street, and found my aunt Susan waiting tea for him.

Directly I came into the room I appreciated the change in outlook that the achievement of Tono-Bungay had made almost as vividly as when I saw my uncle's new hat. The furniture of the room struck upon my eye as almost stately. The chairs and sofa were covered with chintz which gave it a dim remote flavor of Bladesover; the mantel, the cornice, the gas-pendant were larger and finer than the sort of thing I had grown accustomed to in London. And I was shown in by a real house-

maid with real tails to her cap, and great quantities of reddish hair. There was my aunt too, looking bright and pretty, in a blue-patterned tea-wrap with bows that seemed to me the quintessence of fashion.

She was sitting in a chair by the open window, with quite a pile of yellow-labeled books on the occasional table beside her. Before the large, paper-decorated fireplace stood a three-tiered cake-stand displaying assorted cakes, and a tray with all the tea equipage except the teapot, was on the large central table. The carpet was thick, and a spice of adventure was given it by a number of dyed sheepskin mats.

"Hel-lo!" said my aunt as I appeared. "It's George!"

"Shall I serve the tea now, mem?" said the real housemaid, surveying our greetings coldly.

"Not till Mr. Ponderevo comes, Meggie," said my aunt, and grimaced with extraordinary swiftness and virulence as the housemaid turned her back.

"Meggie she calls herself," said my aunt, as the door closed, and left me to infer a certain want of sympathy.

"You're looking very jolly, aunt," said I.

"What do you make of all this old Business he's got?" asked my aunt.

"Seems a promising thing," I said.

"I suppose there is a business somewhere?"

"Haven't you seen it?"

"'Fraid I'd say something *at* it, George, if I did. So he won't let me. It came on quite suddenly. Brooding he was and writing letters and sizzling something awful—like a chestnut going to pop. Then he came home one day saying Tono-Bungay till I thought he was clean off his onion, and singing—what was it?"

"'I'm afloat, I'm afloat,'" I guessed.

"The very thing. You've heard him. And saying our fortunes were made. Took me to the Ho'born Restaurant, George—dinner, and we had champagne, stuff that blows up the back of your nose and makes you go *So*, and he said at last he'd got things worthy

of me—and we moved here next day. It's a swell house, George. Three pounds a week for the rooms. And he says the Business'll stand it."

She looked at me doubtfully.

"Either do that or smash," I said profoundly.

We discussed the question for a moment mutely with our eyes. My aunt slapped the pile of books from Mudie's.

"I've been having such a Go of reading, George. You never did!"

"What do you think of the business?" I asked.

"Well, they've let him have money," she said, and thought and raised her eyebrows.

"It's been a time," she went on. "The flapping about! Me sidding doing nothing and him on the go like a rocket. He's done wonders. But he wants you, George—he wants you. Sometimes he's full of hope—talks of when we're going to have a carriage and be in society—makes it seem so natural and topsyturvy, I hardly know whether my old heels aren't up here listening to him, and my old head on the floor. Then he gets depressed. Says he wants restraint. Says he can make a splash but can't keep on. Says if you don't come in everything will smash. But you *are* coming in?"

She paused and looked at me.

"Well——"

"You don't say you won't come in!"

"But look here, aunt," I said, "do you understand quite? It's a quack medicine. It's trash."

"There's no law against selling quack medicine that I know of," said my aunt. She thought for a minute and became unusually grave. "It's our only chance, George," she said. "If it doesn't go——"

There came the slamming of a door, and a loud bellowing from the next apartment through the folding doors: "Here—er Shee *Rulk* likes *Poor Tom Bo-oling*."

"Silly old Concertina! Hark at him, George!" She raised her voice. "Don't sing that, you old Walrus you! Sing 'I'm afloat!'"

One leaf of the folding doors opened and my uncle appeared.

"Hullo, George! Come along at last? Gossome tea-cake, Susan?"

"Thought it over, George?" he said abruptly.

"Yes," said I.

"Coming in?"

I paused for a last moment, and nodded yes.

"Ah!" he cried. "Why couldn't you say that a week ago?"

"I've had false ideas about the world," I said. "Oh! they don't matter now! Yes, I'll come, I'll take my chance with you, I won't hesitate again."

And I didn't. I stuck to that resolution for seven long years.

TO BE CONTINUED.



HENCE THESE TEARS

THE boy had had a bitter disappointment, and in order to get over it he came out into the street and cried like a youngster in the teething stage.

A benevolent old gentleman, ever on the lookout for helping those in trouble, came along and found the little chap in tears, so he stopped and made inquiries.

"Hello, my little man," he said in his kindest tone, "what are you crying for?"

"F—father fell down two flights of stairs," sobbed the boy.

"Dear me—dear me!" went on the old gentleman. "What terrible accidents do happen! Never mind, my boy, he'll soon get better."

"It ain't that," sniffled the tearful lad. "My sister saw him fall all the way and I didn't see nuffin—boo-hoo—boo-hoo."

Heinze's Yarn

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "The Freebooter," "Zollenstein," "The Waddy," Etc.

The satiated modern man of brains seeks new fields of impression and excitement to rouse his zest in life. The members of the Mutual Annihilation Society are all capable men of the world, leaders in their various lines of endeavor, and they crave new experiences, new sensations. They get them in a grim and mysterious way, as this unusual Ferguson story shows.



I HAD known Jack Anstruther two years. He was city editor of the *New York Star*. That's enough. You know whether or not he had brains and nerve. The *Star* is no slouch. Anstruther was the nearest thing to a news god that the Row had ever knocked off. The arteries of not only the city but the world were bunched under his big fist. The Row predicted big things of Anstruther. That was before he began to throw back. Then they said it was "so long, Mary." But they could understand. He had been keyed up to such a pitch for years, crammed to the muzzle with excitement, that he *must have* excitement. But he had a streak of the esthetic in him. Instead of blowing around to Griffin's, throwing in balls like the rest of the boys, Anstruther took to cocaine. So said the Row and it waited for his finish—not unkindly.

Now I was star man under Anstruther that year and had had a good chance to see what size hat he wore. If he wasn't made of iron then I'm a Democrat. Drugs couldn't grip him. Nothing short of Paris green could say "I'm here" loud enough for him to sit up and take notice. He ate up excitement like mush. And yet, as the Row

said, he was slowly but surely throwing back. Twice, of late, he had let the *Bulletin* carry off a beat. And each new week found the line running from his big nose to his bulldog mouth grow a little deeper. And once when Buck, night editor, breezed in unexpectedly and tapped Anstruther on the shoulder, he jumped like a cricket and tore the flimsies clear across. I was there and I saw.

"I'm as fidgety as an old hen on a hot egg," he laughed. "This pace gets your nerve in time."

But I saw him furtively finger the sweat from his brow and I caught a glint in his eye I didn't fancy. I've seen that glint in the eyes of a treed cat with a bulldog underneath waiting to get next. There was no doubt about it. Anstruther's nerve was going—fast. And it was not whisky; it wasn't drugs. I watched Anstruther after that. It made me sore because he would not tell me what had him. We both were Yale men, but he wouldn't play pals any more.

"It's overwork," he laughed at my probing. "Chop it off, Billy. You don't make a good wet-nurse."

"All right," I said. "You know I don't."

Once I heard the "old man" say if Anstruther didn't take a vacation pretty soon that he would give him one—for

life. A week later Anstruther said he had accepted a week-end invitation to some Long Island burg, and he asked me to make it two.

"Come along," he urged; "it'll be all right. Blight's a chap who hates a visiting-card."

"Blight?" I said. "Who? Timbrooke Blight? Do you bunk in with him?"

"Sure," laughed Anstruther. "Known him for years. His millions don't choke his heart. He's got some kind of a country place down Roslyn way—modestly calls it a bungalow. It's nice and quiet and I'll be glad of it."

"Any one else going?" I asked. "I hate high collars and women—sometimes."

"You forget that Blight's a bachelor," said Anstruther. "It'll be a sort of two-day smoker. Heinze, Bates, Goddard are going. What do you say?" I hung in the wind.

"Oh, throw a Bible and tooth-brush in your grip and breeze along," urged Anstruther.

I noticed that, metaphorically, he was striving to lose his official garment for holiday attire. And I also noted that my friend had an unenviable habit of searchingly inspecting every passerby, be it man or woman; as if he were expecting some one.

"Looking for any of the boys?" I asked.

He eyed me sharply I thought.

"Why—er—no. Well, are you coming?"

Now, I'm not superstitious. Haven't time to be. But I'll say right now that a vague premonition of impending trouble fingered my liver. Somehow I had a firm conviction that if I left Anstruther then I would never see him again. I was on the *aqua pura* equipage. My foreboding was not superinduced artificially. Neither was it specific, but I thought vaguely of smash-ups and the typhoid drinking-water of trains.

"See here," I tempted, "four-flush and come with me to Atlantic City——"

"Can't. Given my word," said Anstruther doggedly. I knew he was as

easy to move as a double-barreled mortgage. And so I gave in. From the Fifth Avenue Hotel I phoned up home for the "Bible and tooth-brush." Blight and the boys were to meet us in the hall of fame, or the rogue's gallery as some prefer to call it. In due time Bates, Goddard and Heinze dribbled in. Bates also writes for a living—or lives despite writing. Last year he made Europe squirm with "Royal Families in the Making."

"So you're with the bunch?" said Bates to me. "Say, isn't Blight a little bit of all right, eh? Know him long?"

"Not very," I said dryly. "Never met him socially yet. Coming on Anstruther's say-so."

Goddard laughed. He owns the Union Cable Company. "Well, your work on the *Star* is passport enough," he said. "Blight's a queer chap," he ran on musingly. "He has a passion for brains. He doesn't give a tinker's rap for money or position. They naturally came when he owned Wall Street, but they weren't the reward he set out after. He went into the market merely for the love of pitting his brains against the other chap's. The society of brainy, nervy men is food and drink to him. Why, on his visiting-list are the rag-tag and bob-tail of the world. But every one is there with the gray stuff if not the green. And Blight's millions are always there to help 'em buck circumstance. There's only one kind of man he has no use for—a coward."

"Of course," commented Anstruther thoughtfully. "No one has any use for a coward."

Heinze spoke; following ceilingward with his "cock-eye" the thin blue streamer of his perfecto. Heinze stinks of chemicals. He's the man who cured cancer. Emperor William and the other boys in the king business stuck medals on him somewhere. "Blight," said Heinze slowly, "with all his brains should join the Mutual Annihilation Society. I bet he would be the Great Mogul."

"Eh?" said Goddard. "Sing it, will you?"

"The Mutual Annihilation Society," repeated Heinze quietly. "Ever hear of it?"

Goddard wrinkled his flat nose. "Say," he ruminated, "when did they let you out?"

Heinze laughed. "I mean it," he said. "It beats Stevenson's suicide club. I know you won't believe it. It's strange enough for a lie, but a plague sight more ghastly——"

"One of Heinze's yarns," cut in Goddard with an explanatory wink to us. "I know the brand." Just then Blight entered and Heinze's mild protestations were cut short.

Timbrooke Blight at that time was the great Napoleon of the "Street." He had his bank-roll in every deal under the sun. He had been "featured" in more Sunday specials than any human, not excepting Dowie and John D. He was self-made. That is, God gave him brains enough for a dozen men, and omitted to furnish nerves. "Timmie" did the rest. A well-hated man. It is bad form for popularity and success to hob-nob. Of course I had heard much of Blight and even written him up, but this was my first social introduction and, Bohemian though I was, I was pleased.

Blight's greeting was familiarly cordial without being offensive. I was received into the enviable "rag-tag and bob-tail" visiting-list without formality; without letting me see that any barriers were being let down for my especial benefit. I wish I could remember all the stories we six swapped, the various slabs of experience, reminiscences and esoteric knowledge that were distributed from the Thirty-fourth Street car to the "bungalow."

The crowd was like a diamond—brilliant, sparkling, reflecting the light of the world. I was used to the pace of the Row, but Blight exuded an atmosphere that made me feel as if I had spent my best years in Philadelphia. It acted on us like a tonic. My mentality received a strong fillip. I felt as if I were on the world's firing-line. I took an almost insane zest in turning an epigram, in the battle of wits, in going

some of the crowd one better. And Anstruther I noticed surpassed himself. He had temporarily forgotten that nose-line and the glint of the master passion.

Ten o'clock that night found us scattered round the dining-table. Blight had given us a rattling day, capping it with a better feed. I had seldom or never enjoyed myself more and looked forward to the morrow. The "bungalow" was the swellest country place I had ever seen. But with all its grandeur you felt you could lay your feet anywhere you wanted. I was glad to see that Anstruther was looking like his old self. Blight had taken us for a dash down the Jericho Turnpike in his huge motor-car just before dinner and the wind had blown the last remnant of dull care from Anstruther's eyes.

There had naturally been a lull in the handing out of brilliant verbiage, but with the coffee and smoke we all started off again like a lot of phonographs. When we had got run down a bit Bates, who has an awful eye for "copy," asked Heinze for the finish of the yarn he had started in the Fifth Avenue. Now I didn't know whether or not Heinze was lying—he's inclined that way—but after a time I didn't care, for the yarn he got off had all my ears. Goddard said openly that the narrator was lying whole-heartedly.

Said Heinze, blowing smoke: "I first heard of the Mutual Annihilation Society while in London. I was at the Cecil and I made the acquaintance of a New York gambler—one of the kingpins. He had just returned from Spa, but the baths hadn't done him any good. He was a wreck. He was entirely alone, ostracized I suppose, and he seemed very glad of my acquaintance. At least he said so. I was glad of it too, for the man interested me. He owed no allegiance to any stimulant or narcotic, of that I made certain, and yet he was a nervous wreck. By and by I discovered his malady.

"Gentlemen," said Heinze impressively, "the man was haunted by fear. Piecemeal, for he said, and I knew it, that he would go insane if he did not talk to some one, he told me his story.

It seemed—there was a secret society, with headquarters in New York, called the Mutual Annihilation Society. Its membership was composed of men in all walks of life who had tasted experience to the dregs and craved some new excitement that money could not purchase. My friend said that they were not necessarily roués but merely full-blooded; their brains constantly at bursting pressure; each man the leader in his profession or business. In that respect and in their methods they were unlike the members of Stevenson's suicide club which all you gentlemen, of course, remember. But like that fictitious gathering, these men played against death. Necessarily they were one and all cynics and atheists. To enjoy the game one must not believe in a future existence——"

"Go on," said Bates impatiently, "what was the idea?"

"Well," resumed Heinze deliberately, sure of his audience, "this gambler assured me that three times a year the secret society met at a certain private house used as a club. A hat was filled with beans, among which were two black ones. The beans represented every member. In turn each man, blindfolded, stepped up to the hat and picked out one bean. Each of the two who drew the black ones was pledged to kill the other before the next meeting. Gentlemen, you can readily imagine what a filip to the jaded nerves it must have been to untie the handkerchief and ascertain whether or not you had drawn against a man you liked or—hated."

"But that's mere crass brutality," said Blight with contempt. "Where do the brains come in?"

"Wait," said Heinze equably. "It was arranged this way. The pledged antagonists had to kill one the other in such a fashion that it would appear either as suicide or an accident. No other way was permitted by the rigorous code. So the two men left the house knowing that in four months' time, perhaps in four days' time, either one or the other would be dead. Sometimes it would be a young author and

an old financier who would draw the beans that meant annihilation for one or the other of them. You can imagine the battle of brains that would follow. Each would muster all his creative faculty and ingenuity to do away with the other. If the job was bungled and murder suspected the entire club pooled their brains in defeating the law."

"And what became of the bungler?" asked Anstruther sarcastically.

"Well," replied Heinze slowly, "an executioner was chosen by lottery and his identity kept secret from the bungler. Of course he must compass the culprit's death in the prescribed manner or he himself would be executed by another one drawn by lottery, and so *ad infinitum*."

"Ugh," shivered Bates. "And the marked man didn't know whom he was to look out for? That would kill my nerve. And I understand why the code executed a man who bungled his job. It would do away with any unfairness. But supposing two men were pitted against each other and they were friends? Then suppose they only pretended to make away with each other; or supposing one got cold feet?"

"In both events," said Heinze, "the executioner by lottery acted. And any treachery to the society was punished in the same manner."

"Then your gambling friend of the excessive imagination comes under the ban in telling you," said Goddard dryly.

"He was already under the ban," said Heinze gravely. "That's just what was the matter with him. He had drawn a black bean, and a man whom he cared for—an old college-mate, drew the other. Both welched for the first time in their life and the gambler fled to Europe, making no attempt to carry out the agreement. He lived in perpetual fear, for every chance person might be the executioner by lottery."

"How?" I asked. "He knew all his club-mates, and if one showed up he might put it down as a certainty that he was the doctor."

"But new members might have joined in the interim," said Heinze. "And

they would be given a photograph and description of their man."

We were silent. Heinze's yarn had made an impression despite our sarcasms.

"And what became of your gambler?" asked Bates, at length.

"He was reported to have committed suicide by throwing himself from the Dover and Calais boat," said Heinze gravely. "You may remember the account of his death last year. It was in all the papers. His name was Penfield."

Heinze knew how to spring a climax. "Penfield?" we all cried. We were silent. Penfield's name had been as famous in New York, in the country over, as any man's.

"Why," I said, "I knew him well. He was at Yale. You remember him, Anstruther?"

"Yes, I remember him," he said slowly.

"What became of the other chap?" asked Bates, "the one who drew against Penfield. He too welched, didn't he?"

"Yes, he welched," said Heinze. "I don't know what became of him. Penfield, poor chap, wouldn't tell me his name."

Goddard laughed. "Why, you boys look as scared as if there *was* such a society. Don't you know Heinze by this time? Penfield's death was accidental. Why don't you tell us where the club is, Heinze? In your imagination, I guess, and only there. And how are the members recruited, you old hoary romancer?"

"Yes, yes," said Blight eagerly, his eyes shining, "tell us where the club is and how we can join. I'm willing to take a chance. I'll stack my ingenuity and brains against any man's. It's all fair and square. Fairer, by a damn sight, than the Street, for you can't rig the game and you pay with your life for any infringement of the code. And I'll bet it's exciting all right. Pitting your brains against your neighbor's. I'm not kidding you, Heinze. I mean it. How about it?"

Heinze shrugged his shoulders. "I know nothing more than I've already

told you. I don't know where the club is or who are its members. Penfield gave me to understand that it was somewhere in New York. I don't know how the scheme was organized, but some devil must have been the originator of it. Men who had made their mark in the world, big men in every sense, those who craved excitement, who possessed a passion for gambling—anything—who were sick of the world—were carefully approached and, their honor tested, recruited. It is not a money-making scheme, so my gambling acquaintance assured me. No dues are charged. The club-house is furnished by the originator of the scheme and the tri-monthly dinners furnished gratis."

"It's not a bad idea," said Bates thoughtfully. "It would be very nice if one didn't believe in a hereafter or could believe that taking an antagonist's life was like checking his king in chess."

"The idea opens up great possibilities," added Goddard.

"Yes," agreed Anstruther. "Now suppose for the sake of argument, a man joined this mythical society of Heinze's and suppose, for the sake of argument, this man was a cynic—one of the brainy atheists who are so plentiful in big cities nowadays, who believe in neither God, man nor the devil. But suppose this man came to believe in heaven, in hell, in the decent average, in the ultimate good of everything—"

"You mean suppose some girl foozled him into believing that twaddle?" asked Goddard sarcastically. "You mean supposing he fell in love, eh?"

"We'll leave women out of it, if you please," said Anstruther quietly, a look in his eyes I didn't fancy. "We all can remember we had a mother if we don't care to remember any other woman."

"That's right," said little Bates. "Go on."

"Well, I mean," added Anstruther lightly, "suppose this man believed in these things too late. Suppose, like Penfield, he had drawn against a friend and—welched. Suppose even as God-

dard says, he had—er—cared for a girl—learned to love her. And he knew the unknown executioner was hunting him down, had in fact known that the said executioner had attempted his life. That is, he had been dodging 'accidents' for a year. Now, seeing that the girl—er—was interested in him, do you think it would be right for this man to appeal to the law for safety?"

"Decidedly," said Bates, and Heinze and I agreed. But Goddard said: "He should have thought of such possibilities before. Anyway if he gave the society away they would have his life and he might as well live up to the compact and die like a man. He ought to be brave enough to take his medicine."

"That's right," nodded Blight seriously. "Knowing the conditions, that at any time he might have to fight for his life, he had no right to go and get mortgaged—make the girl care for him. As I understand Heinze, nothing was hidden from the members when they joined. They enrolled voluntarily. I suppose any member pledging secrecy could withdraw when he wished provided he was not engaged in a contest at the time. If there's anything I hate it's a coward."

Goddard nodded. "You've missed your vocation, Heinze. You should have collaborated with Laura Jean Libbey."

"I'm glad if I've entertained you," said the doctor agreeably. "Now let us talk of something more agreeable."

"And probable," added Blight with a smile. "But I really wish you could put me up at that wonderful club of yours, eh, Ferguson?"

"Too rich for me," I said, repressing a shiver.

It was after twelve o'clock when we at last scattered to bed. Late as it was, however, I switched on the light and, taking a volume from the select little bookcase, endeavored to read. My room was on the second floor. Heinze was two doors down. Goddard, Anstruther and our host were on the first floor. My thoughts owned no sovereignty of dominion that night. I

was restless; constantly thinking of Heinze's yarn; trying to keep a certain cabilistic two and two from making four. I am practical, unsentimental, without nerves, and yet I was forming equations that gave me the shivers. Somewhere from down-stairs a grandfather clock chimed the hour of one.

As the last echo died away I heard something move in the corridor outside. I jumped a yard. I admit I was scary that night. I rose and flung wide the door. It was Heinze in a long green dressing-gown. He looked like a pickle.

"I can't sleep," he explained apologetically. "I saw your light. Can I get a cigarette from you?"

"Come in," I said, glad of the company. "Can't sleep myself." He took a Morris chair and we blew smoke at each other.

"That confounded yarn of yours has got on my nerves," I grumbled at length. "Were you lying, Heinze?"

He looked at me queerly. I saw half-smothered, half-born suspicion in his inspection. "I mean," he said quietly, "are you one of the members of the society? I won't give you away to the boys, but I'll deal with you myself. I'm warning you fairly, you see."

"Look here, Heinze," I said when I'd got my second wind, "I've had enough of your confounded fooling. Damn your society."

"Hold on," he said quietly. "I want to get at this thing if I can. You're Anstruther's friend—closer than I am."

"Well?" I said shortly.

"Well," he echoed, "Anstruther is a member of the society."

For a long time my eyes and Heinze's met, clinched and broke. I know my face was white at that moment and my voice would have been if it could. Here was Heinze dabbling in my fearsome cabilistic equations. I thought I alone knew them.

"Did you come here to speak of that?" I asked at length. Heinze nodded.

"I'm afraid," he said simply, "Anstruther has the same look in his eyes

as Penfield had. I can never forget it or mistake it. It's fear. I've watched him, watched him to-night. I believe he was the other 'welcher'—the man who drew against Penfield. You were classmates of both. Do you know of any reason why two such opposites should be friends?" I nodded dully. Heinze was but voicing my suspicions.

"I don't like to tell it," I said, "but Penfield got into some scrape at Yale, before he was expelled, and Anstruther took the blame—for the sake of Penfield's sister, a mighty splendid girl."

"Oh," said Heinze softly, screwing up his eyes. "I hate probing a man's affairs, but I believe Anstruther was stating his own case to-night when he spoke of the hypothetical member who had attained regeneration too late."

"I know," I whispered. "I felt it at the time, Heinze. Anstruther keeps his affairs to himself, but I knew he cared for Miss Penfield. I suspect that through some misunderstanding or because she considered that her brother had irretrievably disgraced the family, she broke off with Anstruther. It may have been due to that or merely to his environment, the pace he went that made Anstruther the cynic he is—or was."

"I see," murmured Heinze slowly. "Then on Penfield's death his sister resumed relations with Anstruther or the misunderstanding was smoothed out. At all events it retrieved Anstruther too late."

"Something like that, Heinze. But it's not too late. It's not too late," I cried hotly. "I laughed with Goddard and the rest at your yarn, but I believe it. God help me, I cannot but believe it. I too have watched Anstruther. I too have seen that look in his eyes. We must save him. We must—we will!"

Heinze did not reply.

"Damn his perverted sense of honor," I added excitedly. "He's not going to throw away his life and ruin the girl's. We must save him. I'll communicate with the police——"

"Yes," said Heinze, awakening from a brown study. "But I'm afraid it will be too late. They'll get him anyway.

But we'll do our best. We must watch him."

I shivered though the autumn night was warm. "Can you believe that such a hellish gamble should exist to-day?" I said.

"It's evolution," commented Heinze cynically. "And only the preliminary move is a gamble. The rest is skill—criminal skill. That is why it appeals to the members. They are a type of the modern soulless genius. Mere moneyed games of chance have lost their charms for them. But we must save Anstruther."

"Yes," I said, "we must save Anstruther."

Heinze left me about two o'clock. His verification of my fears left me in a poor condition for sleep. My head was a maelstrom. That fear in Anstruther's eyes was before me again in all its terrible potency. I knew Heinze never lied unnecessarily. My last conscious thought as I at last staggered into a miserable sleep was that I would stick to Anstruther like a summer cold; never let him out of my sight for a moment.

I awoke, every nerve on the alert, as the grandfather clock below stairs was commencing to say it was four. I awoke with the sweat on my face. I dreamed I had heard Anstruther choking—horrible gaspy chokes. They were so real, so sensate that I sat up in bed listening, a wild fear at my heart. The fear of the night, of the suddenly awakened was strong upon me.

All was silence. I was about to connect with the pillows again when suddenly I heard some one running in the hall below. There came a dull shout, another and another. I heard Goddard's raucous tones, Bate's hysterical treble, Blight's commanding barytone. Then there was a rush in my corridor. There came a bang on the door and Heinze's voice followed with:

"For God's sake come on, Billy, there's hell to pay. It's Anstruther!"

There followed a profound silence. I dashed out of bed and hurriedly dressed in fourteen languages. I was out of the door like a shot. Then I became

conscious for the first time of an all-pervading smell. It was gas. Gas everywhere. I felt it in my nose, in my mouth, in my lungs. I joined Bates, Goddard, and Heinze at Anstruther's door. The gas was thick in the room.

"It's all up," gasped Heinze and his voice slid the scale.

"P-poor old ch-chap," stuttered Bates, openly crying.

"Suicide," said Goddard very soberly. "Why the hell did he do it!"

Blight and the butler, towels about their faces, were opening the one window in the room. Paralyzed I watched their shadowy forms and ghostly movements. Still numb, I watched them carry poor Anstruther into Blight's room next door. They laid him on the bed. We gathered about in silence. I shivered. Gas makes a bad job of a man. Anstruther was all in. Then for the first time I noticed something lying on a chair. It was a Colt's revolver. The butler had found it on the little table in Anstruther's room.

As soon as he could regain some vestige of self-control, Blight wiped the sweat from his brow and said: "I was excited when I went to bed. I was thinking of Heinze's confounded yarn. Somehow it had got me. I sat up and played solitaire. I heard you chaps walking overhead and so guessed you were in the same boat. About two I turned in. I awoke with a feeling of suffocation. It was gas. I rushed into the hall. The smell was fearful. It came from Anstruther's room next door. I called for Carradice—the butler. Anstruther's door was locked. I burst it down. Every jet in the room was streaming gas. The one window was locked. Just then Carradice came and you fellows a moment later. I found Anstruther seated in a chair fully dressed as you see. And that gun there was on the table beside him. I guess he had first planned to blow holes in himself and then thought gas the easiest way. Poor chap! Something was nagging him. I don't know whether any of you gentlemen noticed the queer look in his eyes, eh? I guess it

was overwork. I can't imagine what else it could be."

"Sure," said Goddard dully, while Bates was openly sniveling. But I refrained from looking at Heinze.

And the coroner brought in a verdict of suicide. Heinze met me a week later in New York. He had stayed out the week at the bungalow, attending the funeral services which were held there. I had to report for duty at my desk. Anstruther was buried and I was heart-sick of everything. That yarn of Heinze's was killing me. Anstruther may have been driven to suicide or it may have been coincidence, I don't know. But the thought that some unknown murderer had hounded him to the grave set me on fire.

"Somehow I feel it was murder," I said to Heinze. "No matter how improbable, I feel it was murder."

"Then you mean that some one, guest or servant, in the bungalow, was the murderer?" asked Heinze quietly. "That follows as a corollary. Some one in the bungalow, either guest or servant, was the executioner by lottery."

It came as a shock to me.

"And how," asked Heinze deliberately, "could this some unknown one turn on the gas when the door and window were locked and Anstruther was awake?"

"I know it plainly looks like suicide," I admitted. "There was the gun and all that. But for that confounded yarn of yours, Heinze, I would be willing to admit that Anstruther was temporarily insane from overwork. But then there was that look in his eyes. What do you think?"

"I stick to the Mutual Annihilation Society," he said grimly.

"How?" I asked wearily. "How?"

Heinze smiled. I have seldom seen such a cynical, world-weary, disgust-for-humanity smile in my life and I don't care to see another. It spoke volumes. Heinze, it said, had lived.

"Well," he said dryly, "suppose the thing happened this way. Suppose Anstruther was invited down to the bungalow for the express purpose of doing away with him. Supposing he

didn't know that his host was the executioner by lottery but, being a fellow club-member, suspected. But he had grown desperate by the constant hounding, sub rosa, and had determined to face the issue. Supposing he had been drugged at the table. It could be done easily. Supposing he had determined to sit up all night with a gun in order to frustrate any 'accidental' attempt on his life. He locked the door and window—as it was expected he would do. Then the drug had overcome him as he watched and waited. And the gas did the rest."

"How?" I cried. "How could it with the door and window locked as you pointed out to me?"

"I pottered round a bit," said Heinze, casually. "That's why I remained. There were gas-logs, you may remember, in Anstruther's room. I found that the connecting pipe led into the room next door and could be turned on from there."

"You mean—Blight's room?" I whispered, though I should have known what was coming. Heinze nodded cynically.

"You see he could time the action of the drug. Then flood the room with gas through the logs, run out, burst open Anstruther's door and when we arrived simply say that every jet had

been turned on. Or he could turn on every jet if he wished. Of course before leaving his room he had turned off the flow of gas. Do you understand? Don't you think there was a great quantity of gas there that night to have come from a chandelier? Wasn't it queer that Anstruther's room should have gas as well as electricity? And why should there be gas-logs when Blight never inhabited the house in winter? It was a summer place. And then there was but the one small window. Those are my suspicions, Billy; you can have them for what they're worth. The pipe leading into Blight's room is enough for me."

"And me," I whispered. "What can we do? Tell me, Heinze," I asked, savagely gripping his arm. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing. Blight has all the influence in the world. What jury would believe there was such a thing as the Mutual Annihilation Society? Who would believe the evidence? They would simply say, 'It's one of Heinze's yarns.' But you and I, for Anstruther's dead sake, for Miss Penfield's sake, will watch Blight. And if ever I have him dead to rights"—Heinze clenched his powerful hands and I swore softly. I vowed there would be a sequel to "Heinze's Yarn" if I swung for it.



A LETTER TO KEEP FOREVER

WHEN you get an illegible letter from a correspondent, don't lose your temper and write him a scathing rebuke. Just sit down in a good humor and concoct one like this of Mr. T. B. Aldrich to Professor E. S. Morse:

"MY DEAR MORSE: It was very pleasant to me to get a letter from you the other day. Perhaps I should have found it pleasanter if I had been able to decipher it. I don't think I mastered anything beyond the date—which I knew—and the signature—which I guessed at. There is a singular and perpetual charm in a letter of yours; it never grows old; it never loses its novelty. One can say to one's self every morning: Here's a letter of Morse's. I haven't read it yet. I think I'll take another shy at it to-day, and maybe I shall be able, in the course of a few years, to make out what he means by those t's that look like w's, and those i's that have no eyebrows. Other letters are read and thrown away, but yours are kept forever—unread. One of them will last a reasonable man a lifetime. Admiringly yours,
T. B. ALDRICH."

The Nucleus

By Allan Taylor

Our readers were so pleased with Allan Taylor's racing story in the August number that they will surely welcome another good one from the same author. A couple of clever Yankees think they know something about the horse game, but before Tennessee Jim Lindsey gets through with them they have added several pages to the loose-sheet book of knowledge.



HE gold letters on the glass door read:

HAMILTON TRIM—
MINES.

While their size was impressive and the words held much of promise, they really

told little, all of which was quite in accordance with Mr. Trim's character.

Just now Mr. Trim was standing at the window of his "aerie" nervously chewing the butt of a very good cigar, one of an endless series of cigars which in their passing had singed short his bristling sandy mustache, giving it the look of a freighter whose cargo had listed.

Presently the door opened, without the formality of a knock, and turning, Mr. Trim surveyed the newcomer whose grimy hand was proffered with a careless "Hullo, Ham, old sport! How's things?"

Mr. Trim frowned at such familiarity, but tempered the rebuff with a graceful sweep of his hand toward the chairs.

"Dick, how's the world using you?"

"It ain't," was the succinct answer, "fer some years."

"Well, if they're coming as soft as that I suppose you aren't open to a business engagement."

"All depends on the price; you know me."

"I'm no piker, Dick; it will be a good figure, so you needn't worry."

"I won't 'cause I *do* know you. It's th' other folks that'll worry. I was sizing up th' gold letterin' on th' door—have you put Wall Street in hock?"

"No, Dick, but I have decided for the time being to retire from active work in the Street. From prehistoric times which you wot not of, a change of base has often proved profitable to those who keep a finger on the public pulse."

"A rolling stone don't gather to any great extent," said Dick.

"But it gets out from under, though, Richard."

"Oh, I see you're making a getaway."

"My boy, I've sold a mine to-day after hard work, brain work, the most exhausting, to which——"

"Oh, chop it," said the other impatiently. "What's your play?"

"As I said. I have this day sacrificed a hole in the ground which cost many thousands to dig for a miserable ten thousand dollars to a young enthusiast who I hope——"

"Say, Ham, your hair needs dustin'. Are you going to talk sense? My time's worth money."

"Be calm, Richard. As I was saying, the brain fag which I've acquired must be floored. I need relaxation."

"I'll put you on a meat diet, Ham. There's a corkin' show up to Billy El-

mers' to-night. A couple o' murderers are goin' t' step some part o' six rounds, an' every round'll put you back a couple o' years. I've got two tickets if——"

"I must remind you, Richard, that you're here to listen to a business proposition."

"Well, Ham, I'm like the forty-year-old that's still in th' maiden class. I'm waitin' for you t' propose."

"Exactly, but you'll allow me to state the case in my——"

"Come across with your bid, Ham. I'm a little gun-shy of all this salve."

"Well, here it is in a capsule. Take it at one gulp if you want to. Badge Hunter has put me on to a live one."

"That guy? Why, he——"

"Gently, Richard. You're positively bloodthirsty. This is a mission of peace. Badge has put me on to a good thing. A colt with 'champion' branded on his hide in forty languages and a thousand dialects, and he's owned, my boy, by a farmer, a good thing—do you get the connection?"

"Two good things," said Dick, "and you want me t' what?"

"I've a piece of money, Richard, and I know that this is straight, but I'm not a John Madden, and I need some one who knows horses. I remembered that was your line, and knew you were on the level, so I said to myself, I'll take Dick along to look at this wonder, and if he sizes up according to the prospectus, we'll put one over that will loom up like John D. in the bread-line, and this one will be the nucleus of a good stable."

"Where's this gold-mine and what's his figure?"

"Up in Canada. Nobody is wise to him, and if you'll stake your horse-sense against my money we'll go halves. How does it hit you?"

"If we find we're up against a dead one, who settles? I'm too wise, Ham, t' throw away a century on a tip handed by any skate like Badge Hunter."

The older man laughed. "As I've said before, the risks are all mine, and should this fact thread the button under your cap, which you foolishly call

a head, I repeat. If it sifts through that concreted spheroid of bone designated by science a 'koko,' will you do me the honor?"

"When do we start?" said Dick.

Mr. Trim looked at his watch. "It's now four-forty-five. Our train pulls out of Grand Central at six, arrives Montreal next morning, leaves there at ten, we arrive God knows when, play our date and fade away immediately whether there's a train or not. I have the tickets, the cab is ordered, and unless your social engagements preclude, I judge from your effusiveness that we are to be bunkies, so as the elevator is on a strike, we'll hit the stairs. What say?"

"James Owen O'Connor didn't have nothin' on you," said Dick. "How long have you been hittin' th' pipe?"

"The cultivation of an exclusive line of conversation has been capital to me, my boy, and I haven't buried my talent, otherwise I should not be permitted the luxury of your company to-day nor would I be able to tender you this fifty dollars with the information that this season the smart set has chucked three-piece suits in four patterns, while trousers with fluted bottoms draped over tan shoes with black lacings are relegated to the scrap. Take it from me, Richard, you look like a bum. Do you follow me?"

Mr. Lawrence grinned delightedly. "I don't get your whole chatter, but this green looks fit t' win a rig that'll force me into the social register. You've sure got me goin', Ham, an' I'll be waitin' at G. C. at five-thirt."

Next day about noon, Messrs. Trim and Lawrence arrived at Teborville, Canada, with its jumper-clad natives, and its combination hotel, drug-store and livery-stable, in front of which were three or four vehicles of the buckboard type. On the steps of the tavern lounged Geli La Boulard, a prosperous habitant, who offered an effusive "*Bon jour, messieurs*," to Dick's curt nod.

"We want a carriage to take us out to the Lindsey place. Hillandale Farm."

"Leendsey place, Leendsey——" Geli rolled the name on his tongue. "Ho—— Mique!" and in response, a rugged little man hurried up.

"Say, Murphy," blustered Dick, "we want a cart to take us over to the Lindsey place. Hillandale Farm."

"Sure, man, I know where you mean; it'll be five dollars the trip."

"How far is it?" put in Trim shrewdly.

"A good four miles," said Micky, "an' th' roads the divvil an' all."

In ten minutes a little gray mare was harnessed to a "buckboard," as Mike called it, and they jolted away on the road that led to the farm.

"You know Mr. Lindsey?" queried Mr. Trim.

"No, sor, he's a new one, a tall, lean-lookin' old gent. He don't mix much with the folks round here."

"Is he a farmer, Mike?"

The little man laughed. "Farmer is ut? Not a thing did I ever see them grow out there."

"You say he doesn't work? Must have money."

"The place don't look ut." Then, shaking the mare into a trot at the top of the hill, he pointed with his whip: "That's Hillandale, you can see for yourself."

As they rode up the grass-grown drive, a middle-aged man with grizzled hair and mild blue eyes came down from the house to meet them.

"Mornin'," he said inquiringly.

"My name's Trim, Mr. Lindsey. We're buying a few horses, and hearing you have a good colt, thought we'd take a look at him. Fine big place you have here."

"Coming from the South it seemed mighty cold here this winter, but I reckon I'll get used t' it," said Lindsey. "Won't you step up on the porch and set? I've got some good sharp cider from down home that beats all your red liquor," and he shambled inside.

"He's a new act sure. We'll humor him, and talk business afterward," and when Lindsey returned holding in the crook of his arm a heavy stone jug,

and dangling from his fingers three tin cups both declared that, as an ice-breaker, Lindsey's cider had the harbor tug *North Star* up on the dry-dock for repairs.

"We'd like to look at this Lady Agatha colt," said Trim, wiping his lips.

"All right, we'll take the short cut over this fence t' th' track. Bank ain't so steep t'other side of th' stable, an' we get th' horses up th' path round behind there," and his long arm swept a half-circle.

Up on the plateau, Dick walked a short distance on the track testing it with his foot. "Rough," he commented. "I'd be afraid t' move a horse on such a piece o' ground."

Lindsey laughed. "Rough, yes, but Tom's spry as a cat. He'll only hit th' ground a few times."

"Have you any distance marked out?" queried Dick.

"From that there post over yonder to this here apple-tree's jist a quarter-mile."

Across the field through the grass came a bay colt trotting slowly, and perched on his back with clinging bare legs was Lindsey's boy "Red."

"Hell, man!" Dick jerked. "Where's th' saddle?"

"What for a saddle?" chuckled the old man. "We don't need nothin' fancy; this here is only play for that baby."

Dick walked round the colt. "A well-made one, with plenty of bone," he muttered, and jumped nimbly aside to escape the flying feet.

"Take him up and down a few times, boy," Lindsey ordered.

The big colt trotted off, breaking into a sweeping gallop beautiful to see, his powerful driving quarters showing under the shining coat.

"I've a stop-watch," said Mr. Trim. "We'd like to see the colt go a quarter. About what do you think he can show?"

"Never fooled with no watches, but he eats it from the first jump. Start him from a stand, an' you'll see what a good breaker he is."

Dick nodded and, aside to Trim,

said: "With a rotten track, standing start, and a chore-boy riding him, we won't be fooled much."

There was a moment's delay before Dick dropped his hat, and Trim snapped the watch.

On he came with a rush, the long stride quickening into that snapping action which makes for speed, the bare-footed boy simply clinging to the equine dynamo between his tanned legs, as the colt finished fighting for his head.

"Cool him out and bring him round to the house, Red," said Lindsey; then as the two men watched the colt canter across the field toward the embankment he added, "What do you think o' him? Ain't he a cooler?"

"Fairish," was Dick's reply.

Lindsey's face flushed. "Mr. Lawrence, I don't know nothin' 'bout th' way you city folks do business, an' I ain't a sportin' man, but I know a good horse when I see him, an' I ain't never seen a better one than Tom."

Trim smiled. "What do you think the colt's worth?" but Lindsey, owning old-time ideas of hospitality, proposed a drink, saying, "No gentleman can do hisself justice in a horse trade lessen he feels like he orter."

When he had gone into the house Trim quickly said, "Well, Dick, what do you think he's worth?"

"Any price you have to pay," emphatically. "I never saw as good a one."

"What's your price?" said Dick when Lindsey reappeared.

"Wall, seeing that he's mine, an' there's enough grain and hay on th' place t' keep him for some time, I reckon forty-five hundred's the figger I'll have t' name."

"Too high, man! You're crazy!" Trim blustered.

"Not for Tom! He ain't no hobby-horse."

"A quarter in twenty-four and a half seconds doesn't show a world-beater—you saw the watch."

"Yes, I saw it," quietly, "and I heard it click too, when the colt was a hundred feet past the finish. Makes some

difference when you stop them contrivances, don't it?"

The two men spoke a moment in low tones. "Well, make out a bill o' sale, and I'll give you my check."

Lindsey reflectively chewed a wisp of straw. "You'll pardon me, stranger, but I ain't had only one experience with checks, an' that cured me, nothin' personal."

"How about yellowbacks?" laughed Trim, putting his hand in his pocket.

"They'll do. Come in and set down while I make out a bill o' sale." In a moment he handed over: "Received from H. Trim forty-five hundred dollars as payment in full, for brown colt Tom, star on forehead, off hind ankle white, small scar on near foreleg below knee, dam old Flora by Norfolk. Signed Jim Lindsey."

Dick signed his name as witness, after suggesting that "old Flora" be scratched, and "Lady Agatha," the registered name and number, be substituted.

"Well, the colt's ours now," said Trim bruskiy, "and we'll lead him back with us. Good day, Mr. Lindsey, and good luck to you," and the buckboard rolled away, Dick driving, while their Irish guide sat on the springless rear leading Tom.

Jim Lindsey watched them, a wistful look in his eyes, but when Red remarked that "them fellers must git their money easy," the old man said solemnly, "Boy, the Book says, 'Thou shalt not covet.' We got a good price for that colt."

Arrived in New York, Mr. Trim went out to suburban Westchester, where he hired a small stable, engaging board for Dick and a boy in the house to which it belonged, and two days later met Dick and the colt upon arrival in their private car.

Dick had never seen Trim quite so happy, for pride of possession held him in iron clamps, and he looked gloatingly at his purchase.

"He's a jewel, Ham!"

"That's just it, Dick. We'll name him 'Kohinoor'—"

"Cohen-or what?" said Dick. "Nix

on th' Cohen, Ham. This ain't no Roman-nosed horse, an' take it from me, he's th' fastest thing that ever stepped round a ring, and I've named him 'Jim Corbett.'"

"How did he stand the trip, Dick? Was he seasick?"

"Never missed a meal, and looked for more."

Mr. Trim, with beaming face, said, "We'll set him going to-morrow; I want the pleasure of snapping my watch as he's hurtling through space."

"All right, this gang goes to work to-morrow, an hour before the whistle blows, but you must back-pedal for a few days 'til th' colt comes round, 'cause he's up against a stiff game. Change of climate, water, a tough stretch on the car knocked about like a rube in a side show, an' we've got t' give him a chance. How about a boy for th' gallops?"

"Oh, everything is fixed. Bumps Watson and I are old pals. He knows this game from finger exercises to concertos, and he sent me a likely boy to look after and we'll use him."

"I don't know Watson, but th' boy's all right, if he sent him," agreed Dick.

At the end of the second week, Mr. Trim, who had repeatedly asked for fast work, sat on a rock by the roadside, watch in hand, while his keen eyes shifted rapidly from the flying hoofs to the slender hands, but his look of pleasant expectancy scurried away before a dark frown embedded in heavy wrinkles of rage and disappointment, and when Dick appeared he saw a red-faced apoplectic, who shook a hand from which dangled a fob as he sputtered:

"Do you call this a trial? What do you mean by such a rotten performance?" and held up to Dick's amazed eyes the watch, its split-second hand pointing accusingly to thirty.

"Tell me, is it a joke? Come here, boy"—to the youngster who had ridden up to them. "What orders did Mr. Lawrence give you? What orders, I say?"

"Told me to cut him loose, sir."

"Cut him loose?" echoed Trim.

"Something's wrong, and I'll find out what it is. Turn him loose! You bet I will if this is on th' level."

"Say, Ham, you sound like the whistling-buoy down t' th' hook. Do you think I'm crazy? Get wise t' yourself, 'cause if you pump it into me much more, I'll make you loop th' loop, an' this goes."

Mr. Trim, brought to himself by the inelegant force of Dick's language and the imminent danger from that red fist, recovered himself quickly.

"My boy, I was a bit hasty, but we mustn't quarrel. As that great man William Penn said, 'When gentlemen mix it, who gets the money?' or was it Honest John? Anyway, we must get at the cause of this slump. Think of it! thirty seconds. Why he couldn't beat a belt-line car."

Dick looked dubiously at Jim Corbett, who leered at his owners in utmost contempt.

"I've heard of sleepers, Dick; do you suppose he's one of them?"

"It would take an end man to answer your question, Ham, but I don't mind tellin' you that sleepers ain't sleepers to their owners. They're pony expresses that bring home the money. Jim was the 'Empire State' 'til he slipped his eccentric, or maybe the macadam was too hard for him. You know 'Uncle Si' was givin' him the Kneip cure up home, workin' him bare-foot in th' soft goin', and likely he's sore."

"Well, we'll wait a while longer, then if he doesn't improve, we'll have to get some of the big guns to look at him," then added, "you don't suppose that there's something the big stables use that we aren't wise to? I've bought everything you've asked for," and he glanced around the room the walls of which were covered with a costly array of boots, weights, rolls, plates, scrapers, cloths and bottles.

"We haven't overlooked anything, have we?"

"No. You sure have been a swell provider, Ham, but give me one week more. If we can get him right, we

won't have to divvy with no third party."

"Well, Dick, get your incubator to working, and hatch out a plug that will stop the leak in the treasury. This is getting on my nerves."

Dick whistled thoughtfully.

"You have a most damnable habit of whistling when I'm talking to you, Richard."

Dick bent a coldly calculating eye and said slowly, "It's when I'm whistling that I'm putting in my best licks thinking."

"I see, Richard. And what might the classic be which you so airily dandled on your tongue?"

"The Handicap," was the cool reply, "and the race only two weeks off. It's worth twenty-five thousand to th' winner."

"Well, Dick, more than one man got his bundle with a jimmy, and our Jim is the champion of them all. Bumps Watson will be here to-morrow, and if we let him in on the deal he'll tell us things we don't know. We've got a grand tool to work with, and if we don't collect we're a couple o' dopes."

Dick was not overjoyed, but he nodded his assent and Mr. Trim continued, "You be at my hotel in the morning. Ten sharp. Watson arrives at ten-thirty, and we'll have our talk and perhaps learn all we want to know without letting him in on the deal. My policy is, if you have friends, use them, and if Bumps tips us off without our making an assignment to him, so much the better."

Next morning Dick arrived on the minute, and two faces eagerly expectant greeted the jovial Mr. Watson.

"Howdy, Ham. Great Scott! open the window. Room smells like a stable on the Southern circuit," at which Dick guiltily shifted his chair into a far corner.

"Tickled t' death t' see you, Bumps. Have you been beating them?"

"Surest thing! Had th' time o' my life."

"Nothing like knowing the game, Bumps. Horses must be an interesting study."

"Surest thing! Some o' them are good all th' time, some o' them part o' the time, but many a fast one has his off days like cooks an' prima donnas."

"No doubt, but when you're wise it's easy t' set them going again." Mr. Trim spoke coolly enough, but exulted at the turn which the conversation had taken.

"Surest thing!" Mr. Watson looked at Trim and nodded toward Dick. "I ain't th' pleasure o' knowing his nibs, but if you two ain't on speaking terms, tip me his number so's I can say 'Howdy.'"

Trim immediately hurried the introduction. "Mr. Watson, my friend, Mr. Lawrence," etc.

Dick seized the chance of gaining knowledge. "Say, I heard once of a corking fast one, a regular track-warmer, but he lost his speed. He looked as good as ever, but he couldn't, or wouldn't run a lick. They said it was sulks. I s'pose you seen cases like that?"

The big man slapped Mr. Trim on the knee, laughing aloud, until asthmatic wheezing choked him off. "Ham," he said at last, "I come home on th' Northern Pacific and stopped at Montreal, where some hot ones come off the bat in the racing game, an' heard one that'll make you loosen up. I was at the Windsor with a bunch who told some pretty lively stories, one about some guy with a fat roll hearing of another Salvator owned by some farmer up round there, who didn't know he had a gold-mine."

"Seems this fly New Yorker goes up bringing an expert along t' get a line on th' colt. Thought they'd git him for nothing. But the farmer knew he had a good one, and made them hand him 'bout five thousand dollars. They was lucky not to give ten, for he showed a fast trial all right."

"I'd like t' pick up one o' that kind, Bumps," interposed Trim cannily.

"Well, you see, Ham, after the trial this poor old rube sends th' colt over th' hill back o' th' stable somewhere, and shifts th' bridle t' some plug a dead

image o' th' other, that's been sweat up and lathered. Th' two wise ones fall for it, hand over th' coin, an' make tracks. Now what d'yer think o' that?"

Trim's body straightened like a rubber hose under high pressure. His breath nearly strangled him, but he managed to ask, "When did this come off, Bumps? Who framed it up?"

"Why—it's an old game, They used a capper by th' name o' Badge Hunter, a bum whose been kicked off every track in America."

"When this sport tumbles, he'll prob-

ably do up that farmer, don't you think, Bumps?"

"Nix! That rube is Tennessee Jim Lindsey, and th' kid is Soup Curtis, the toughest rough rider that ever left a barrier. Both o' 'em's ruled off for life, and there's more than one notch in Jim's gun. No, they won't hurt th' old man."

Dick whistled softly, drawing from Mr. Trim an irritable "What damned tune are you on now?"

"Back to th' mines," said Dick with a grin.



A "LOW-SHOE" COLD

A CERTAIN vivacious young girl has been in the habit of wearing low shoes, and a week or so ago caught a bad cold in consequence. Her mother told the doctor about it secretly, and asked him to advise her not to wear them. When the young lady was ushered into his presence he requested her to give her tongue the usual outdoor exercise, and he examined it attentively.

"Yes, I thought so," said he, with a shake of his head; "you have been wearing low shoes, and have caught what we medical gentlemen call a low-shoe cold. Now, you must stop wearing them at once; and take the medicine I am about to prescribe faithfully and according to direction."

He wrote an innocent prescription, and was about to leave the house, when the patient called him back and paralyzed him by saying:

"Since you were so clever in discovering a 'low-shoe cold' by looking at my tongue, will you be kind enough to take off my shoes, look at my feet, and tell me if my hair is properly dressed?"

The doctor says he has stopped treating low-shoe colds; the girls nowadays are too smart altogether.



SHE TALKED THE ROOF OFF

NATURAL aptitude to grasp a situation has been turned to account more than once on the stage, and in one case, if the veracity of a favorite comedian goes for anything, it saved a panic and possible loss of life.

"We were playing one-night stands," said he, "in Kansas during the terrible period of cyclones, and found ourselves in a large, dilapidated building, called, by courtesy, a theater.

"The low comedian was on the stage in the part of a drunken husband receiving a vigorous lecture from his wife. 'Madam,' he had just observed, 'if you keep on you'll talk the roof off,' when there was a roar heard, followed by a tremendous crash, the building swaying like a tree in a storm. Everybody jumped to their feet, and found the roof had been carried away. They were about to turn and make one dash for the exits, when the comedian, coming down to the footlights, looked up into the air, and, quick as a flash, turned to the lady and said: 'There, what did I tell you?' The audience howled with laughter, and the quick-witted comedian was undoubtedly the means of preventing a serious calamity."

The Expert Accountant

By William Hamilton Osborne

Mr. Osborne makes his advent to the pages of "The Popular" with an exceptional story of high finance and crime. Not that the two are necessarily related, but they rub shoulders familiarly. The boy whose father was a burglar is an interesting character and the conflict between his inherent criminality and the good influences that develop his better nature is deeply dramatic. We do not recall a better story of its kind.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHADOWS ON THE LAWN.



PETER WESTENDORF and wife alighted from the closed carriage, dismissed their coachman, and ascended, wearily, the broad stone steps of the veranda of their home.

"I'm glad *that's* over with," sighed Westendorf's wife, as they passed through the suddenly opened outer door. Side by side they entered the cozy little room at the end of the big hall. There were bright lights there, and a wood-fire that took the chill off the early autumn air. Mrs. Westendorf, a portly, middle-aged woman, loosened her wraps and revealed a bare neck and shoulders, and a gray velvet gown bespangled with ornament and lace.

"Card-games are such a nuisance," she complained, "and the Blakies, anyway, are such a stupid lot."

Peter Westendorf did not answer. He flung his overcoat and hat upon a convenient lounge—until now he had kept both on—and slumped down into a chair at the window that overlooked the lawn. His attitude was such that his stiff shirt-bosom crumpled into a shapeless mass.

"I like card-games," he returned.

Then he lapsed into silence. His wife, seated, leaned heavily against the table, resting her head upon her uplifted hand and arm. She drew toward her the evening paper and read it casually. Suddenly she straightened herself and turned toward her husband.

"Peter," she said, "we've got to be careful. These burglaries are getting worse and worse. Asher's house was broken into last night, and the Berkeley Beaches lost five thousand worth of jewels while they were at supper." She placed her hand upon the ten-thousand-dollar dog-collar she was wearing to make sure that it still was there. "This paper," she went on, "says that that makes twenty cases so far this month. They say it's probably a New York gang. It's a regular epidemic. Suppose," she whispered, "suppose they tackled *us*." She pressed a button on the table.

"Um," said Peter Westendorf abstractedly. Then he, too, drew himself from his crumpled-up condition. "Daisy," he said to his wife, "I'm going to form a trust company—the People's Trust Company—right here in town. Callahan and Donkersloot are going in with me. I'll tell you all about it—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of a little Japanese servant. His wife held up her hand for an instant, and nodded to this new arrival.

"Shiosuke," she ordered, "I want you

to be very careful in shutting up the house. To-night and every night. We've the biggest house in town, and there have been robberies everywhere. Be particular about the burglar-alarms and—*everything*. You see?"

Shiosuke nodded and departed. Mrs. Westendorf turned back to her husband.

"The trust company," she resumed, "is—is it *safe*?"

He laughed. "I should think so," he replied, "especially for us. I'll tell you how it is. I need a whole lot of money to develop that big tract of mine up on the hill. Callahan has got to have cash to put into his White Line. And Donkersloot needs some new cash in his brewery business. And there you are."

Mrs. Westendorf raised her eyebrows. "Then how can *any* of you afford to put your money into a new trust company?" she queried. Peter laughed a raucous laugh. "You don't understand, my dear," he said—"we form the trust company—it'll be the only one in town—not to *put* money *into* it, but to *get* money *out* of it. The public puts in its money, and the trust company loans the public's money to ourselves. You see?"

Mrs. Westendorf yawned. "You're clever, Peter," she admitted, "you ought to have been in New York. I've always said it, and always will say it. You were born to be a New York man." She yawned again. "Good night," she said, "I'm going up to bed."

"I can't turn in," returned Westendorf, "until I've worked out just how to get the best of Callahan and Donkersloot, my dear." He rose and stood while she left the room. Then he switched off the electric light, and strode to the dying fire and warmed his hands. Finally, in the darkness, he went back to his seat at the window and once more slumped down, criss-crossing his shirt with new broken lines.

"I've got to keep control——" he mused softly to himself. He liked games of cards, so he had said. And now, he was sitting in a three-handed game, with Donkersloot at one corner and Callahan at the other. From the darkness within, he stared into the

moonlight without. They say that fishermen can hypnotize themselves by watching a cork bobbing up and down upon the surface of the sunlit sea; that then the hours pass with them like minutes. It was so with Peter Westendorf. Within his range of vision there was a neat patch of moonlit lawn, close-cropped, darkly green under the cold light from heaven. Upon this patch of lawn, placed at irregular intervals, were three slender, well-trimmed shrubs, casting three distinct shadows on the lawn.

To the eye of Peter Westendorf, sitting there hypnotized, with the hours passing like minutes, these three shrubs had the appearance of three men. At first he singled out one as Callahan, one as Donkersloot, and one as himself. As he watched them silently, however, he saw that one bore acute resemblance to a man with a musket on his arm; another to a swordsman with his rapier raised toward heaven; the third seemed like some pugilist, with huge gloved hands waved threateningly about his head. The *fourth*——

Peter Westendorf suddenly found himself sitting up straight in his chair, and peering out of window, every sense alert.

"Where the dickens did the *fourth* come from?" he asked himself. He looked again. Yes, there was a fourth shadow. There was no doubt about that. And like the other three, this shadow, too, was silent, still. It was a shadow that had detached itself from the solid blackness of the wall. And yet so rapidly had it detached itself, so rapidly assumed its present position on the lawn, that the act had been unnoted by the owner of the house. And, even as Westendorf watched, the fourth shadow leaped once more, this time toward the nearest shrub, and became one with the shadow of that shrub; so that where there had been four, there now were three.

"A very active shadow," mused Westendorf softly to himself. And even as he mused, the fourth shadow tore itself once more away from the third, and with some sudden trick, made up

of leaps and bounds and wriggles, this fourth shadow became, almost instantly, a part of the unbroken blackness cast by the big house upon the lawn. Westendorf waited, spellbound. Then for the first time he heard a soft, scratching noise below him and outside.

"By George," he told himself, "it isn't a ghost. It's a man. And—he's coming in at this window, too."

The window was full fifteen feet above the ground. It was fully wired with an alarm wire. Westendorf left the window, strode to the lounge and pulled on his overcoat, and buttoned it up to his chin, with the collar turned up all about. He pulled his hat well down over his eyes.

"The alarm'll have a merry time when the idiot opens that window," he assured himself. He was not afraid. The burglar was somewhat undersized, if the moonlight had told the truth. Westendorf was a big man. He had often boasted that he was a man who could grapple with any emergency. Here was an emergency, and he would grapple with it. Already in his mind's eye he could see the head-lines on the first page of the next day's paper. It wouldn't be a bad "ad" for the new trust company, either, this sensational capture; for he hadn't the slightest doubt of his ability to make the capture.

The alarm would ring the instant the window opened. But it would ring in the stable, and in the servants' quarters in the top of the house. But the burglar wouldn't hear it. The minute the burglar crawled through Westendorf would collar him. So he told himself. Westendorf stole silently to the table and from a bottom drawer he took a small, shining weapon. He leveled it toward the window.

Suddenly there was a scrunch, a wrench; the noise of splintering wood. The screws that held the catches were tearing from their fastenings.

"There he is," whispered Westendorf, his heart going pitty-pat. Yes. There he was—the burglar. He was crouched on the broad stone ledge of

the window-sill without. His body shut out most of the light that had straggled in. Westendorf could hear him grunt, and strain; could feel the quiver of the assaulted lower sash. Then softly, smoothly, the window opened.

Westendorf listened for the faint buzz which would indicate the ringing of the alarm. He listened in vain. There was no buzz. Slowly it dawned upon him that the wires had been cut. He sickened slightly. Yes, it was up to him now, alone, unaided. To make an outcry might be to invite immediate destruction. He drew himself up in the darkest corner of the room, and breathed softly through his mouth, just as the burglar dropped lightly to the floor.

For one instant only, the interloper paused and listened. Then with the air of one familiar with his ground, he crossed the room swiftly, and, without hesitation, entered the darkness of the big library beyond. Westendorf followed noiselessly and waited just outside the big room. He could not hear a sound. But suddenly he nearly gasped with surprise. A disk of bright light appeared upon the surface of the big old-fashioned safe, and moved across it. Then the handle of the combination seemed to leap from darkness into light, and the disk of brightness remained there. Then the hand of the interloper thrust itself into the disk of light, and turned the handle, softly, slowly.

The reflected rays showed that the ear of the burglar was placed close to the door of the safe. The man didn't know the combination; but he did know, from the sound of the tumblers, just how to work it. He knew something else. He must have known it—that Westendorf had fifteen thousand dollars in bills in that safe, and that Mrs. Westendorf's big dog-collar and all her other jewels were stowed away inside.

"*Hands up!*" Westendorf switched on the electric light and uttered the exclamation at one and the same time. He didn't know exactly why he made that exclamation in particular, except that it seemed the usual and proper

thing to do. It was effective enough. The burglar swung about in an instant and placed a hand on his hip pocket. Then he cowed before the formidable appearance of Westendorf. Westendorf had big shoulders and with his coat-collar up and his hat—an opera-hat it was, but half smashed and jammed down upon his head—he had the appearance of a respectable thug.

"Hands up," repeated Westendorf, "and face to the wall." The burglar obeyed, and Westendorf gingerly stepped across the room and relieved the man of his gun—for he had a gun. Then Westendorf seized him suddenly by the collar and swung him about, so that the interloper faced him.

"Gee-whiz," exclaimed the burglar, "you're not Mulvaney!"

"I'm Westendorf," replied his captor.

"If I'd known *that*," sighed the prisoner glancing regretfully at his revolver which lay far from his reach.

Westendorf yanked his prisoner across the room, into the little den, and touched the button that his wife had touched some hours before. The button in the big library was out of order. Then he switched on the light in the little den, too, and waited. After five minutes the head of a sleepy little Jap thrust itself into the den.

"Shiosuke," commanded Westendorf, "telephone for the police."

Even as he said it, there was a rustle at the window, and a big man, with big shoulders, clambered suddenly inside. Westendorf glanced at the big man in alarm, and drew himself into a corner, with his prisoner shielding his body. The big man had a pistol in his hand.

"Shiosuke," yelled Westendorf in terror, "telephone for the police."

The big man only waved his hand. "The police is here," he said. The big man was Mulvaney, of the plain-clothes force in town.

"I suspected him. I followed him, and I lost him; what with the moon and the shadows," said Mulvaney, "and you got him. Can you hold just a minute, sir?" he queried.

Westendorf laughed. "I'll hold him for a year if necessary," he replied.

Mulvaney whipped out a dark lantern and cast its strong light upon the window-sill and the bottom of the window. He turned back to Westendorf.

"And you found him listening to the tumblers at the safe?" he queried. Westendorf nodded.

"Ah," said Mulvaney, with a sigh of satisfaction, "the epidemic of burglaries is over. *We've got the gang.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY WITH THE BROWN HAT.

The boy with the brown hat lit a cigarette. Then he strolled up toward the court-house.

"Shouldn't wonder if they'd finish by one o'clock to-day," he told himself. Suddenly the court-house bell rang and the boy quickened his steps. The wind was toward him and the bell clanged loud in his ears. The court-house, built like a huge Egyptian tomb, on a slight eminence at the end of the street, resting against the black shadow of a bank of clouds in the western sky, was a thing gloomy, terrible; a thing to be feared. The boy shivered, half with cold and half with fear. He tossed his cigarette away as he ascended the steps, and took off his hat and smoothed his hair back with one hand. It was cold weather, but the boy still wore low shoes.

He was one minute late when he entered the court-room. The judge was on the bench, the jury-box was punctually filled, and the counsel for the defense was upon his feet. The boy dived toward the rear of the court-room, and slouched into his usual seat. Then he looked about him. He cast one glance at one particular spot in the fore part of the room. Then he glanced again. Then he started.

"Where in thunder is the prisoner?" he exclaimed. Then he saw. The prisoner was on the witness-stand, telling his story.

"What did they want to put *him* on for?" wailed the boy. It seemed to

him as though he, personally, were on that high stand in front, submitting to the gruelling of counsel, and he squirmed and wriggled in his seat and bit his finger-nails, until the man next him nudged him violently.

"Stop your fidgetin'," complained the man. "Ain't you never been in a court-room before?"

"No," said the boy. Which was quite true, though he was twenty years of age. He stopped his fidgeting, and the man, mollified, began a good-natured conversation in an undertone. "I just dropped in myself, bo," said the man; "who's the *big* guy at the end of the table?"

The boy sniffed nervously. "That's Westendorf," he said.

"Gee," returned the man, "he's the man that *caught* him? Gee! I know who he is. He's the president of the People's Trust Company. The new bank. I've got an account there. Three and a half per cent. So that's Westendorf. Has *he* been on the stand?"

"Sure," answered the boy.

"I'd like to have heard him testify—about his ketchin' him," the man returned.

A court-officer rapped on the back of a bench. "Stop all conv'sation," he protested.

The prosecutor of the pleas was cross-examining the prisoner. "Cunningham," he said, "you say this was your first offense." He picked up a few queer-shaped articles that clinked. "How long ago did you buy these burglar tools?"

The prisoner glanced helplessly about the court-room. He didn't understand cross-examinations. No sooner had you lied once than you had to lie ten times to support that one. He faltered. Why the dickens hadn't his counsel told him beforehand how to answer these blamed questions? He rubbed one hand upon the other.

Suddenly, glancing far down the aisle, his eyes met the eyes of the boy with the brown hat. For an instant the boy stared at the prisoner; the prisoner stared at the boy. It seemed to each as though neither could tear his glance

away. But none knew of this mutual gaze save the boy with the brown hat and the prisoner at the bar.

"Answer the question," exclaimed the court. The prisoner came to himself with a start. The stenographer repeated the question and the prisoner answered it, with the first lie that came into his head. The people in the court-room snickered. The boy flushed as the prisoner flushed. The man next to the boy nudged him again.

"Gee, what a mutt," said the man; "he'll hang himself if they let him go on."

They didn't *let* him go on. They *made* him go on—to his doom. In fifteen minutes the trial was over. Both sides had rested.

"Come now," said the court, "hustle this through. We must finish here by one o'clock to-day."

By one o'clock. The prisoner knew what would happen to him by one o'clock. He well knew that there was no hope, that there never had been any hope. And yet, he couldn't realize—

While his counsel was summing up, the prisoner kept his back to the bench, his face toward the crowded court-room. Again and again he stared at the boy from where he sat and the boy stared back.

"Gee," thought the boy to himself, "but he was stupid to get caught like that, he was."

By twelve o'clock both counsel had finished, the court had charged the jury and the jury had filed out to the jury-room and the prisoner had been spirited away to the little anteroom with the barred door.

It was at five minutes after twelve that the girl in the long blue raincoat entered. Every day during the three days of the trial, at five minutes after twelve, the girl in the blue raincoat had come in. This time, as she had done before, she passed down one side of the court-room, across the back, and sat down among the seats reserved for ladies at the farther side. She, too, sat in her usual place. The boy with the brown hat, seeing her, sat up very straight, uncrossed his legs, and

smoothed his hair once more from left to right. He was quite near the seats reserved for ladies, and when she turned to the woman next her to make inquiry as to the progress of the trial, he heard her question and answered it himself.

"The jury's out," he said, aloud. The girl nodded her thanks. She turned again to the woman next her and lowered her voice.

"It's as good as a show, isn't it?" she rippled on; "it's better than any of the theaters in town. I just came to see *this* man tried. I've never seen a burglar, except this one. And *we* think that *this* man is the *same* man that tried to get in *our* house one night—my mother keeps one of those big boarding-houses on Parkhurst Avenue, you know—and I suppose he *thought*, from the size of the house, that he could make a haul. But we're sure that *he's* the man."

Involuntarily, and with the air of one who witnesses an exciting tragedy, she clutched the woman next her by the wrist. "Look there," she cried, half hysterically, "they're coming in. I'm glad of that. I can only get here lunch-time, and now I can see the *finish*." She caught her breath sharply. "Look, there *he* comes again, to face them."

The boy with the brown hat had watched her. He watched her chiefly because he liked to watch her. She had not been in the court-room that first day for thirty seconds before he had been aware of her presence.

"Gee," he had told himself on that first day, "but she's a queen. She's a great piece of work. She *is*."

Unconsciously, during those three days, which seemed like three years to him, he had arranged events according to their importance. Unconsciously, in his mind, her advent was the one important happening upon each day. He was a boy. He was twenty years of age. And she was a girl, a wonderfully-put-together girl, with a fine, strong healthy glow upon her face. And as for her eyes—

And besides, he had observed that

she had noticed *him*, stealthily, when he wasn't looking. Yes, he felt that as part of this exciting drama she took *first* place. But the girl was not all. Those terrible moments when the prisoner's glance burned into his own—they took second place in the order of exciting things. But these, after all, were only incidents in a great event, a tragedy—

There was a silence that could be felt. The boy leaned forward with the crowd.

Nervously the foreman of the jury scanned the piece of paper in his hand. He grasped the edge of the table as though to steady himself. Then he spoke.

"Guilty, your honor," said the foreman of the jury, "guilty of burglary in the first degree."

Immediately, as though by signal, the boy's glance once more sought the prisoner's, and the prisoner responded.

"Gee, that's tough," exclaimed the boy, "and he's never been convicted before. Not him."

"How do you know he ain't?" growled the man.

"Well," returned the boy, "he said he wasn't."

"Ah," returned the man, "but he might've, in England, or Australia, or New York, or anywheres, for all *you* know. What do you know about him? Or what do I? I'll bet he's seen the inside of the cooler a dozen times or more. He looks it, anyways."

The court rapped with his gavel, nodded curtly, and discharged the jury. Then he took out his watch, noted that it was ten minutes to one, and turned to Cunningham, the prisoner.

"Cunningham," he said, "is there any reason why sentence shouldn't be pronounced at once?"

Cunningham's lawyers said there was; that this was a first conviction; that there was previous good record, extenuating circumstances; that the prisoner must have a little time, say one week at the outside, to get evidence of previous good character; that—

The court merely smiled and looked at his watch once more. "Cunning-

ham," he said, "stand up. It's true that this verdict constitutes your first conviction, so far as we know. But your crime *this* time was in getting caught. The prosecutor advises me that he selected this one case out of a dozen pretty good cases against you merely because this one was the *best* of the lot. The others he informs me are pretty near as good. It's a significant fact that the instant that you were caught the burglaries that terrorized this town stopped at once. You *have* a good record, Cunningham, a good record for being one of the cleverest crooks in town. *This* time you weren't quite clever enough."

The judge stopped and smiled, and nodded toward Peter Westendorf. "I'm glad," continued the court, "that we have one man cleverer than you are, in this town, Cunningham. Cunningham," he went on sharply, suddenly, "I sentence you to State prison at hard labor for ten years. That's all. Take the prisoner down-stairs."

Cunningham caught at the railing, pulled himself together and steadied himself for an instant. *It was* a new experience for him, this first conviction.

"Ten years," he wailed. An officer tugged at his arm. The prisoner at that instant once more swept the court-room with a comprehensive, a despairing glance. The boy with the brown hat half rose in his seat, and flashed to the man in front a final responsive signal, unnoted and unseen by all save this boy and this man.

"Au revoir." That was the signal that was flashed. And then the man passed, perforce, out of one door, and the boy, his hat upon his head, straggled, slowly, out of another, at the tail end of the crowd.

It was all over. The curtain had gone down on the last act. The boy, hitherto held up to the pitch by the rapidly approaching climax, felt his nerves relax, his mind grow dull. Lassitude, emptiness, possessed him.

He lit a cigarette and slowly descended the court-house steps. As he did so a girl in a raincoat passed him swiftly.

"I've got to get back to work at one o'clock," she was saying to the woman who sat near her in the court-room. Swiftly she passed on.

"Gee," said the boy with the brown hat, "I've simply got to see where *she* belongs, that's all."

He quickened his pace and held to the other side of the street. He didn't want the girl to know that he was following her. He had followed other girls, openly, blatantly, laughing aloud to attract them. But with this girl some instinct held him back. Brown hat and cigarettes was only twenty years of age, and he had *dreamed*— Somehow, this girl seemed to fit in with most of his dreams.

He followed her.

"So," he told himself finally, "she works in the First National, does she? Does she? She does, says you."

He was right. She did. He followed her into the bank in a very businesslike manner, seized a deposit slip in a very businesslike manner, and operated upon it with a pen for an instant, also in a businesslike manner. This procedure was meant merely to afford him time to see whether there was any doubt about her working there. Evidently not. She passed on into a room marked "President," drawing off her raincoat as she went.

The boy folded up the deposit slip in a businesslike manner, left the bank and dodged around into a side street. There, through a side window, through the bars and the window-screens, he could see her, at another window, her fingers racing for dear life across the keys of a typewriting-machine.

The boy rolled another cigarette. "Now I know where *you* are, all right," he told himself. Listlessly he strolled away.

"Ten years," he said to himself, "gee-whiz, and the judge was right. He wasn't clever. He wasn't clever enough. Not by a long shot. Ten years. What am *I* going to do, I wonder, for the next ten years."

He turned a corner and walked a block. He turned another corner and walked another block. A slouching-in-

dividual followed him, caught up with him suddenly, and placed in his hands a folded note, and disappeared. The boy turned seven more corners before he opened and read the note.

FOR THE KID,

it was addressed on the outside. It read within:

Boy, you and me won't see each other for near eight years, counting good behavior. It's hard enough, ain't it, boy? I figured out we'd always have to stick together. But I didn't do right. You heard the judge say it. He's smart, that judge. I didn't do right, because I wasn't clever enough. Boy, whis-per. You've got to make up for it. You've got to be clever. You mustn't get caught. You understand. Good-by.

From your old man, C.

P. S.—Whatever you do, don't let anybody know that I'm your father, or that you was mixed up with me. That wouldn't be clever, which you've got to be. You take your mother's name before she married me. I'm glad she's dead. I wish I was, boy. You call yourself Jim Elphinstone. You understand. And say, kid, be smart. And say, kid, look for me in about seven year or so. We got to stick together, don't you see?

He turned another corner, and tore the note into little bits and tossed it down a sewer.

He rolled another cigarette. And as he did so two faces rose before him. That of the little girl in the raincoat, with the fine glow upon her face. That of the old man, with despair and terror written on his countenance. It was a far cry from one to the other. A dream is one thing. A nightmare quite another. Standing there with an unlit cigarette between his fingers, the boy hoped vaguely for three things.

First, that he would be cleverer than his father had been; that he might never get caught. Secondly, that some day he and the girl in the raincoat—by George, he *must* get acquainted with that girl. Thirdly, that the girl might never know about the old man's being a jailbird. — *That* would never do. And then, his mixed emotions caught him; the tragedy, the pathos of it all swept over him. He felt unutterably lonely and forsaken. Suddenly he dropped the cigarette, and leaned limply, forlornly, against the brick wall of a house.

"My poor old man," he wailed, "my poor old man."

CHAPTER III.

THE GIRL IN THE BLUE RAINCOAT.

The holiday rush was on. The superintendent of the Green Store—a man whose veins stood out upon his forehead with work and worry—glanced from the paper in his hand to the store detective who had passed the paper to him.

"This is awful, Snooks," he groaned, "there's hundreds of dollars' worth of goods gone only yesterday. It's either the clerks, or——"

"It *ain't* the clerks," returned the store detective, "I've had the clerks covered this long time by the San Francisco method, all of 'em, new and old; and there ain't none of 'em can beat the San Francisco method. It gets 'em. The clerks is on the level. It's shop-lifters. That's what it is."

The superintendent nodded. "There must've been a dozen of 'em at work, then, yesterday."

The store detective shrugged his shoulders. "More like there's only one. If there'd been a dozen, we'd been liable to get one of 'em or so. But a good clever shoplifter—just one, say—*he* or *she*—and if it's a she, the odds is in her favor—can do the work of fifty, and do it just fifty times as well at that."

The superintendent scanned the list of missing goods. "Most of them," he mused, "are articles comparatively cheap. But such a lot of them."

"That's where she's clever," returned Snooks; "there ain't nothin' missin' from the jewelry-counter. Nor out of the stock o' furs."

"But, thunder," interposed the superintendent, "look at the lace they've got away with. Lace by the bushel, Snooks—and other things."

"Things that's easy hid," said Snooks.

"Snooks," groaned the superintendent, "we've got to stop it. You've got to stop it. If you can't stop it, by George, we'll call in Plain-clothes Mulvaney. Look here, watch the lace—

counter—handkerchiefs, collars, trimmings. Watch it to beat the band. If this goes on another day—— Well, by George, it *can't* go on another day. That's all. It's got to stop. You see?"

"I see," said Snooks, "and I'll do the best I can."

James Elphinstone, born Cunningham, felt lost. He missed his old man. He and the old man had kept bachelor's hall for a long, long time. They had been chummy. He had admired his father, for the old man's cleverness. The conviction, however, had dealt his admiration a heavy blow. His confidence in the old man's cleverness was gone. But, as though to make amends, something took the place of admiration. From the instant that he had dropped his cigarette that day and leaned whimpering against a wall, a wild, strong yearning filled him.

He was homesick; he was lonely; he was miserable. He couldn't have named this feeling, but it was real, because it was love. It was love for the old man. The swift, merciless separation had brought it to the surface. It was unusual, this sentiment, in a boy of Elphinstone's age. Masculine youth does not love its progenitor—not as a rule. Not so that the world may notice it. Sons may revere and respect, may admire, may even boast of, their fathers. But the rest of their sensations consist in mere genteel toleration.

When Jimmy Elphinstone had leaned against the wall and cried: "My poor old man," it seemed as though a great new passion had been born within him. How much of this was due to the nervous excitement of the trial, to the final wrench, he could not know. How much was due to the girl in the blue raincoat he could not know. But she had a part in it, somehow. In the supreme moment it had seemed to Jimmy Elphinstone as though he and his father had been standing, somehow, upon the edge of a precipice; as though, suddenly, as from the clouds, the girl in the blue raincoat had fluttered down to stand beside them; as though in that instant there had been but three people

in the whole world; as though suddenly a mighty force had pushed Cunningham, the burglar, over the side of the precipice, leaving only two people in the world—the boy and the girl.

Jimmy Elphinstone didn't say these things; didn't even formulate them as a picture in his mind—for he was nothing but the son of a crook, a boy with a fondness for cigarettes, a boy with a brown hat and a salmon-colored necktie, a frequenter of burlesque shows. And yet, the girl in the blue raincoat was somehow in his life—by virtue merely of an unconscious glance, a momentary flush, a word or so: "Yes. Thank you." His soul saw all these things very clearly. But his soul kept mum about them. The soul of Jimmy Elphinstone was not yet prepared to hold converse with his mind. It was not his soul that spoke. His tongue performed that office.

"Gee," thought Jimmy Elphinstone to himself, careless, purposeless, reckless, now that the old man had gone up for good, "I'm going to get a knockdown to that girl somehow. See if I don't. I'll get a knockdown to her. If I can't get it, I'll introduce myself. I'll take her to a couple of shows—good ones. And then we'll have some lobster à la Newburgh."

He drew out his cash. Shows and lobster à la Newburgh cost money. His money was fast going; all he had he carried with him. It was all the old man had left. The lawyers had had a whole lot. There were other things; some other crooks had gone back on him. The old man had been skinned by the pawnbrokers.

"It is blamed hard work," Jimmy told himself, "blamed hard work. The life of a burglar is no cinch. None of it in mine. I got to get my money easy—easy." He hummed a tune. "Oho," he finally whispered to himself, "there she is—she is."

He was right. The expected had happened. The girl in the blue raincoat had come out of the bank, had descended the steps, had turned a corner, and was making swiftly for her home. Jimmy followed her. It was

not the first time he had followed girls. "I simply got to follow this one," he told himself, "and besides, I got to find out where she lives. I got to nail her. I can't lose her. If she loses her job at the bank, I got to know where she is when she's at home."

The girl looked neither to the right nor to the left. She didn't know that a young man with a salmon-colored necktie, and a brown hat on one side of his head, was trailing her at a respectful distance. She didn't know when she tripped up the steps of the big three-story house on Parkhurst Avenue and rang the door-bell that in his fancy a strange young man was already taking her to see the show and inviting her to eat of lobster à la Newburgh. But the young man was still there, on the job. No sooner had the door closed behind her than he sprang up the steps, two at a bound, and interviewed the name-plate on the door.

"So, so," he told himself, "she's a girl without a latch-key. And her name is Widdecomb."

The name didn't appeal to him as much as did the girl, but the fact that the girl didn't have a night-key made a strong impression on his mind. "I'll have to be blamed careful how I get a knockdown to this girl," he told himself.

He walked away. He sighed. Like every youth of his age, his imagination penetrated the future by leaps and bounds. He felt within him, vaguely stirring, the matrimonial instinct. He had felt it before. Whenever he had met a girl that he really liked—and he had met five in his time—he would always say to himself: "When I'm married to that girl." Life, in his mind, began with matrimony. Existence before that was merely prelude. And now as he swung along, with a flush upon his cheek, with the excitement of varied emotions upon him, he felt within him some strengthening, settling influence.

"I've got to get down to business right away," he informed himself. He must get to work. He must plan his life. And this sudden resolution set before his mind once more the injunc-

tion of his old man's letter: "You must be clever, Jim."

"By George," he assured himself, "I will be clever."

His father had made a mistake that he must rectify. Burglary was not for him. Burglary was hard work, dangerous to life and limb. A good burglar had need to be an athlete, a hero, a man able to bear bitter disappointment; a man willing to risk his neck to find, after all, that there were no jewels in the jewel-box, and that Mulvaney, of the plain-clothes force, was hid behind the bureau.

Besides, there were the fences—what rotten swindlers they were. A man copped a diamond worth four hundred dollars. The pawnbroker would give seventy-five dollars for it—not a dollar more. And Swiss watches—why you could hardly give them away. You might steal all the valuables you liked, but they didn't really melt down into good hard coin. And a man had to live, too. It was hard. It was stupid—almost honestly stupid, the life of a burglar.

"If I can't get anything easier, and better and bigger—and *safer*," he suggested to himself, "I'll eat my hat."

It would have been wise also for him to eat the salmon-colored necktie in the bargain. But he was in earnest. "I've got to look for a big, quick, safe get-away for mine," he said. The instincts of his ancestry were within him, but tempered with excessive caution; tempered also with the spirit of modern progress.

"A big, easy, quick, safe getaway." That was *his* motto. He hitched his wagon to that star.

It was a month later that he followed the girl for the seventh time. This time she didn't go straight home. She made a bee-line for the Green Store. The holiday rush was on, and everybody who got out at four-thirty or at five shopped until supper-time. The girl joined the crowd. Elphinstone followed her swiftly. He wormed his way in and out among the crowd, always keeping her trim little figure in sight.

"When *will* I get that knockdown to

her?" he complained in despair. Somehow it seemed to him that *this* was his chance. She entered the Green Store. He might follow her, brush against her, accidentally stub his toe, beg her pardon, take off his hat, and say something. What could he say? Something like: "Oh, I see you up at the burglar's trial, didn't I?" Something on that order. Or: "I haven't seen you at any more trials up at the court-house." Something like *that*. Or: "How do do? Any more burglars at your boarding-house?" *That* would be better, maybe.

Meantime she was forging ahead. He was put to it to follow her. She went down one aisle and up the other, dodged here, darted there. Much of the time Jimmy Elphinstone came nearly treading on her heels. Suddenly, however, she stopped, and he stopped with her.

The place at which she stopped was the lace-counter. She walked the whole length of it, taking in everything at a glance. Then she walked back again from one end to the other. Then she stopped at about the middle. Jimmy brought up at the extreme end of the lace-counter, his heart in his mouth, screwing his courage to the sticking-point. She didn't see him, or if she did, she gave no sign. There was no chance just *then*. That was sure.

"What can I show *you*?" The words cut into Jimmy's ears. He turned. The voice was the voice of the salesgirl at the counter—or one of them. Jimmy was game. He was going to stay there till the girl in the blue raincoat moved, and then he'd move. He scratched his ear.

"Something in lace handkerchiefs," he suggested, picking up a box; "what's the price of these?" He thought he might invest, just to hold his ground, even if it cost a half-dollar.

"Those," said the pompadoured lady of the counter, "are three dollars and a half."

Jimmy Elphinstone braced himself. "Show me something more expensive," he said, with hauteur. The salesgirl

started to comply, when Jimmy noted that the girl in the blue raincoat had started off.

"Say, never mind," he yelled to the counter girl, "I can't wait." He started in pursuit of the blue raincoat.

It was while hot on the chase, about four aisles away, that Jimmy Elphinstone suddenly felt a heavy hand laid upon his arm. He turned and glanced up at the face of an unknown man. The man gripped him with fervor and enthusiasm.

"Bo," said the man, "you come with me." He marched him back to the lace-counter for an instant.

"Is this him?" he queried of the salesgirl.

"That's him," she responded.

"What's missin'?"

"A nine-dollar collar out of this box," the girl exclaimed. The grip tightened on Jimmy's arm. "Come with me, bo," said his escort. He marched him the whole length of the store while people watched and wondered and whispered: "*Shoplifter—one of the gang.*"

The superintendent was sitting at his desk, the veins still starting from his forehead.

"Number one," said Snooks, the store detective, bringing Elphinstone up against the desk, "and Plain-clothes Mulvaney couldn't have done it better, if I do say so myself." The superintendent grinned. Jimmy Elphinstone shivered and turned cold. Mulvaney—he hoped Mulvaney wasn't anywhere around. Mulvaney might know who he was.

"Who's the salesgirl?" queried the superintendent.

"134."

"Send for her." She was sent for and she came, bringing with her the empty box that had contained the lace.

"Sure it came out of that box?" queried the superintendent, "and sure this is the man?" She was—quite sure.

"Search him in that room, Snooks," said the superintendent.

"No," said Elphinstone, "I won't be searched."

"You won't, eh?" queried Snooks. "We'll see."

He was searched. But the search was fruitless. And Snooks, crestfallen, took him back to the superintendent. "He probably passed it to one of the gang," said the superintendent. He turned fiercely upon Elphinstone. "You get out of here, you crook," he said; "if we find you in this store again we'll jug you. We'll put Mulvaney on you. That's what we'll do."

He opened the door, and Elphinstone started off. He didn't get far. At the door he met two women. One was a big woman. One was a little woman. Elphinstone started. For the little woman was the girl in the blue raincoat.

"I've got one of them, Mr. Snooks," said the big woman, "and I brought her along just as I found her. Here she is, with the goods upon her. Look."

They all looked. There she was, with the goods on. They all saw her—Elphinstone, the lace salesgirl, the superintendent and Snooks. And there, on the front of her fetching blue raincoat, hanging innocently on a button, that had caught in one of the threads, was a piece of lace. The salesgirl caught it up.

"It's the collar," she exclaimed, "it's the nine-dollar collar, Mr. Snooks."

The superintendent glanced half apologetically at Elphinstone. "The one out of that box?" he queried.

"Sure," answered the girl.

"Shut that door," said the superintendent. Then he turned to the girl in the blue raincoat.

"Well," he exclaimed, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

The girl in the blue raincoat shivered. But she was game. "What have I got to say for myself?" she repeated; "why, just what I told this woman. I never saw that collar until she caught me by the arm and marched me through the store. It caught on that button at the counter, I suppose. You don't suppose that if I was a thief I'd march through the store with that displayed like that."

"Not unless you were very clever," sighed Snooks.

"Ah," said the superintendent. "I guess we've got you with the goods."

The girl thought for an instant. Then she spoke. "My mother," she said, "has an account at this store." She mentioned her name and address. Then she went on. "I am a stenographer in the office of the president of the First National Bank," she said.

"Indeed," they returned superciliously. But she was not fazed.

"I'll sit down here," she continued, "until you find out that I've told the truth." The superintendent gave brief directions to telephone and verify the girl's story. Then he turned to Elphinstone.

"Now you can go," he said. Elphinstone did not move. "Wait," he commanded. He turned to the girl. "Do you know this young man?" queried the superintendent. The girl looked at Elphinstone and shook her head. Then she stopped shaking her head, and flushed slightly. Elphinstone flushed, too. "Why, yes," she said, trying to think where she had seen him. "Oh, yes. You were at the trial of that horrible—that burglar, weren't you?"

"Yes," said Elphinstone, "I see you up there, didn't I?"

"I guess," suggested the superintendent to Snooks, "that we'll hold *both* these people. They seem to know each other, all O. K."

But Elphinstone had stepped to the side of the girl. "Haven't seen you at any more trials up there," he remarked. And then, to get it over as soon as possible, he fired all his ammunition in one volley: "Had any more burglars up at your boarding-house?" he queried.

The girl suddenly started. "You're not a shoplifter, too, are you?" she asked.

He nodded. "I stole that collar that you had with you," he returned.

"They sha'n't search me," she whimpered suddenly. For one instant he placed his hand upon her arm.

"They won't touch you while I'm here," he reassured her. It was good to hear him say it, and it felt good to him to say it, though it was quite patent that Snooks alone could handle three of Elphinstone. She stopped whimper-

ing, and he came back to first principles.

"That burglar trial was great, wasn't it?" he asked.

"As good as a show," she assented.

A show! Elphinstone's heart leaped into his throat. A show! If he'd only had the price left, he would then and there have asked her to see a show and have lobster à la Newburgh afterward.

He was interrupted by the hurried entrance of a bookkeeper from the bank. "What's up?" said the bookkeeper angrily—"I got a balance I've got to fix up. I'm in a hurry."

"Do you know any of these people?" queried the superintendent.

The bookkeeper shook his head. "Nobody," he answered, "except Miss Widdecombe. What's the matter, Miss Widdecombe? Somebody been lifting your pocketbook—or what?"

The girl laughed. "I'm a shoplifter," she exclaimed. She explained the matter. The bookkeeper turned a pitying glance upon the superintendent of the Green Store.

"Oh, pshaw," he said, "tempest in a teapot. I'd advise you people to hush this up. If the president of our bank hears about it, he'll pull the store down over your ears. Won't he, Miss Widdecombe?"

Five minutes later the bookkeeper and the boy and the girl were out in one of the packed aisles.

"Mr. McIntyre," said the girl to the bookkeeper, "this is Mr. —"

"Elphinstone," said Jimmy.

"Glad to meet you," said the bookkeeper. He turned to the girl. "Miss Widdecombe," he said, "I got a difference at the bank. I'd take you home and do it gladly, if I wasn't rushed to death."

"Oh, I can get home alone," the girl replied; "I always do."

The bookkeeper hurried off. Elphinstone turned to the girl.

"I'm going to take you home," he said.

"No," returned the girl.

"Yes," insisted Elphinstone. He descended from command to entreaty. "Won't you let me, please?"

The girl looked at him for an instant. She noted particularly his salmon-colored tie.

"Well," she finally assented, "since we're partners in crime, I will—if you'll only pull your hat on *straight*."

That instant constituted a crisis in the affairs of Jimmy Elphinstone. It was the last time that he wore his brown hat cocked on one side.

"Come on, or Snooks'll get us," said the girl.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR A BIG, SAFE GETAWAY.

On his way back to his three-dollar room in the Y. M. C. A. that evening Jimmy Elphinstone shivered. He shivered first when he thought of Snooks' heavy hand upon his arm. He shivered when he thought of the girl, and of the instant when *his* hand touched *her* arm. His emotions inspired speech.

"Gee," he said aloud. And *gee* meant a whole lot of things to him.

He was glad Mulvaney hadn't seen him. He wasn't sure just how much Mulvaney knew about him. It might be that Mulvaney didn't know that Elphinstone was Cunningham's son. At any rate, Jimmy didn't want him to know; didn't want anybody to know. He wanted to lay low until people had forgotten about Cunningham. It wasn't hard to lay low in a big town like this.

But out of the experiences of that afternoon and evening there was one immediate fact that forced itself upon his attention. The bookkeeper, McIntyre, had struck this keynote when he said that if the president of the bank knew what the Green Store had done to his stenographer he would pull the store down about their ears. And what the Green Store had done to the little—to Miss Widdecombe, it had done to Elphinstone. *There* was the point. He distinctly had the advantage of the Green Store.

There was nothing against Jimmy Elphinstone. He had never committed a crime. He wasn't even guilty of moral turpitude without the range of law.

One of these days he would make of himself a great criminal—a top-notch. But that was another matter. Up to date his career had been careless and colorless. In other words he was without character and without a reputation of any kind.

"And so," he told himself, "I guess I've got the goods on the Green Store."

Next morning he dressed himself with care, leaving off the salmon-colored necktie—for she *had* looked at that just a bit *too* much the night before when he took her home—and putting on instead a blue one, just about the color of the coat she wore. He brushed his clothes. He drew on his brown hat—straight. He counted his change, for he had nothing but change left now. He was down to rock-bottom.

Then he sauntered forth for the Green Store. He pressed on, past the lace-counter, glaring at the salesgirl as he passed, glaring at Snooks, and made straight for the superintendent's office. He saw the superintendent.

"Mr. Superintendent," he said, "my name is James Elphinstone. I live at the Y. M. C. A. You remember me from yesterday afternoon. I am the man you dragged through the store, shamed in the presence of the people in the store, the man you imprisoned, assaulted by searching me, blackened my character by slandering me."

The superintendent nodded curtly. "What of it?" he queried.

"What of it?" returned Elphinstone. "After you admitted to Mr. McIntyre of the First National and to Miss Widdcombe that I was innocent? What of it? What will the *jury* say?"

The superintendent paused. He had forgotten the presence of McIntyre, the First National Bank man, the afternoon before. Yes, there *had* been admissions. The whole story had been told in McIntyre's presence. There *might* be trouble. Snooks had already apologized to the girl and to her mother. *This* chap *might* make a kick. It *had* been an unfortunate business. The superintendent was positive that he *had* made a mistake. He considered carefully the situation.

"Well, Mr. Elphinstone," he said, "we're sorry. What more can we say?"

"Is that *all* you have to say?" returned Elphinstone, with dignity. He rose. The superintendent looked him over. The boy looked different this morning. The rakish air had gone from him. Cleanliness and respectability shone from him. Yesterday he had the air of a corner-lounger. Now—— The superintendent once more considered.

"Well," he asked, "what more do you want? Money? How much?"

Elphinstone smiled. "I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts," he said, "that a jury up in the court-house would give me a thousand dollars right off the reel for what you did to me. That's what."

"Well," said the superintendent, "we won't give you any thousand. We'll give you——"

"You won't give me a cent," replied Elphinstone; "I don't want money."

The superintendent gasped. "What do you want?"

"I want a job."

The superintendent didn't know that this was the thin edge of the wedge. He couldn't understand that before him was a man whose ancestors were criminals, whose instincts were criminal, whose ambition was to make a big safe getaway at some time in the future. He didn't know that this man had applied at nearly every place in town to get a job, and had been turned down everywhere, partly on account of his salmon-colored necktie, partly on account of his hat cocked on one side, partly on account of cigarettes, partly because there was upon him the stamp which his ancestry had placed upon him—but chiefly because he couldn't get and didn't have a *recommendation*. Elphinstone lacked record. He lacked influence. But suddenly he had *seen*—the way had opened up before him.

"I want a job," he said.

"Doing what?" queried the superintendent.

Elphinstone twitched his shoulders. He had as much idea of business as he had of theology.

"Doing anything," he answered. The

superintendent smiled. He had been worried. Now he was pleased. He began to like this chap.

"You're easy," he said frankly, "too easy, I'm afraid."

Ten minutes later Jimmy Elphinstone was down in the basement helping them with the holiday rush; helping them wrap; helping them load; rushing hither and thither; doing this, that and the other thing. All his tasks were unimportant, but they had to be done. At the end of the week they paid him four dollars. At the end of the holiday rush he was one of the few extra men who were kept on at the Green Store. He didn't like it, but he stuck. For he was playing a game.

Late in the spring they put him behind the necktie-counter on the first floor, to assist. He found in stock seven salmon-colored neckties that nobody wanted. He took them well in hand. In ten days he had sold every one of the seven.

"Swelliest things in town," he would assure a customer.

"Only very exclusive people wear these ties," he would add.

"I sometimes wear one myself," he would conclude, as a clincher. At the necktie-counter they paid him seven dollars a week. He was satisfactory. Instinctively he knew how to sell. He was good-looking, neat, pleasant. But he didn't like it. He was only playing a game. It was part of the game to sell neckties, and he sold them.

One day the girl came in and bought a necktie. He had never taken her to a show, never eaten lobster à la Newburgh with her, had never spoken to her since the afternoon when he took her to her home. He was glad to see her.

"I want to buy a necktie," she said.

"Who for?" he began. He flushed. "I didn't mean that," he went on. "I mean—young man or old?" He didn't breathe until she had answered.

"Old man," she replied, "president of our bank. Mr. Albertson. Seventy-five years old," she added.

"This is your necktie," he said.

"Which?" she queried.

"The one I'm wearing," he returned.

She looked at it. "Why, where's your salmon——" she began, "why, that's a *pretty* tie you've got on now," she proceeded.

"It's a very fine tie," he responded, "and it's just the thing for him—a man with white whiskers wants just a bit of rich blue color like that."

"How do you know he's got white whiskers?"

"I've seen him through the side window at the bank times enough."

"You *have*—have you seen *me*?"

"I've seen *him*," returned Elphinstone. Seen her? Well—if she only knew why he had looked through that window. He drew forth a blue tie.

"That's the tie you want," he said. She assented. She bought it. As she was leaving he stopped her.

"Miss Widdecombe," he exclaimed, "I want a job—in a bank. If there's a vacancy—could I find out? Could you let me know? They've got one shoplifter there now," he added; "maybe they can stand two."

"Yes," she answered; "what's your name—no, I don't mean that. Nobody could forget your *name*—Elphinstone. What's your address?"

"Y. M. C. A. rooms, city," he responded, "if you don't mind."

She didn't know, either, that this was part of a game. But Elphinstone knew what he was about. His great slogan was: "*A big, quick, safe getaway.*" But he had some corollaries. One of them was this: "In order to get cash, go where cash is to be found."

The business of the Green Store was to sell goods. The store was filled with goods. But the *cash* of the Green Store was not in evidence. The counters were not filled with cash. The cash was put into the First National Bank or into Westendorf's new People's Trust Company. But the business of a bank is cash. That's all they think about at a bank—cash. They handle it, count it, take it in, pay it out—by hundreds, thousands, millions.

"And that's the place for me," Elphinstone assured himself.

Two months later he received a typewritten postal at the Y. M. C. A. building. It bore no signature. It simply said:

Call First National Bank about a job.

He went. He found a vacancy. He was referred to Albertson, the seventy-five-year-old president. No man was hired save by Albertson. The president saw him in his private room. In a corner of the private room sat Miss Widdecombe, demure, at her typewriter. She stopped the click of the machine as Elphinstone entered.

"We have a job for a runner," said the president, "at five dollars a week. Sit down."

He looked Elphinstone over, asked him question upon question; did everything but feel his pulse.

"So far, so good," he finally remarked, "but the next thing is the most important. Have you any reference to offer?"

Elphinstone bowed. He rose. He drew from his pocket an envelope and laid it on the president's table.

"There," he said, "is a letter from the Green Store."

The president read it and nodded. "What did they pay you there?" he asked. Elphinstone flushed. He hardly wanted Miss Widdecombe to know. "I suppose," he told himself, "that *she* makes twenty-five or so a week." But she didn't. They were very economical at the First National and *she* made only *eight*.

"Seven dollars," he told the president.

Old Albertson raised his eyebrows. "And you give up a seven-dollar job for five?"

Again Elphinstone bowed. "I have always wanted to take up the banking business, sir," he said.

"Very well, sir," said the president. Elphinstone, satisfied, turned and glanced at Miss Widdecombe. He did not speak to her—save with his eyes. And with his eyes he said:

"It is not so bad being near *you* all the time, at that."

Whereupon Miss Widdecombe clicked rapidly on her machine.

CHAPTER V.

THE HUNDRED FIVES.

Albertson died. He was the president of the bank. Three things killed him. Pneumonia was the first. The next was Interstate common. The third was the People's Trust Company that Peter Westendorf had built up. The first of these causes was common enough—quite as common as the complaint specified by the bank's porter—Johnson.

"What did the old man die of?" Elphinstone had asked of this man Johnson. Johnson, rolling up his eyes until nothing but the whites were visible, held up his hands in anguish:

"No-money, sir, no-money."

"Gee, that's a terrible complaint," Elphinstone had returned.

"New-money, I should say, boss," said Johnson.

"Oh," exclaimed Elphinstone, "*pneumonia*."

"Yaas, sir," acquiesced the porter, "*no-money, new-money*—anyways you're mind to say it. It's bad enough no matter *how* you *talk* it, boss."

Elphinstone sauntered into the president's big room. It seemed strange not to see the old man there. But he did see Miss Widdecombe in the corner, and he was going to repeat to her the "no-money" symptoms that the porter had outlined. But he stopped half-way. She was cowering in her seat, holding a quivering chin in one hand and blinking in the strong light of the window. Elphinstone backed away.

"Gee, she's hard hit," he told himself; "the way she goes on you'd have thought the old duck was *her* old man, almost." He felt no pang. The excitement of the old man's death was almost a pleasure to him merely because it was excitement. He retraced his steps into the bank, and softly whispered the "no-money" joke to everybody he encountered. Even McIntyre, the bookkeeper who had come to the Green Store that night to help Miss Widdecombe out, was forced to smile. Then *his* eyes, too, filled with moisture.

"The old man was hard hit, Jimmy.

He invested almost everything he had in Interstate common; even put up his own bank stock as collateral for the purchase. He bought outright. He's got the stock. *You* know what happened. Interstate common went down clean out of sight. What do *you* care, Jimmy? But I know what it means. I bought Interstate common—on margin. Everybody in the bank did, I guess. I was wiped out. I haven't even got the shares to show. And I'm a married man, at that. It's all over. I'm through with the Street. Interstate killed the old man. That and the People's Trust Company. *They're* pushing us hard, Jimmy, paying interest as they are on daily balances. Everybody's putting in money by the bushel over there."

"They've got *new*-money, and we've got *no*-money," returned Jimmy flipantly. He nodded his head sagely. "If I had some money, Mr. McIntyre," he said, "do you know what I'd do? I wouldn't touch Interstate. That's a bum road. But I *would* buy Tri-State. Yes, sir."

McIntyre placed his hand on Jimmy's arm. Jimmy liked McIntyre and McIntyre liked Jimmy. "Boy," he said, "don't *you* ever buy anything. You leave it alone. D'ye hear?"

Jimmy Elphinstone only sniffed. He was just beginning to realize the possibilities of a bank. To be in a bank was not to have physical access to large sums of money. When he first had entered he had supposed that within a short interval of time the way would open up to him—a runner—to get away with one hundred thousand, *two* hundred thousand dollars. Not to-day; not to-morrow—but somewhere in the future. Inside of ten days he had dismissed this idea completely. He had as much chance of stealing fifty thousand *safely*—well, he had less chance than the paying-teller, and the paying-teller had no chance at all—not *safely*. He could see that now at a glance.

But—Wall Street—that was another matter. The paying-teller *could* take a thousand or even two thousand one day or one week and pay it back the next. And that thousand, taken and put

back, retaken and replaced, time and time again, might make millions for a clever man.

"Wall Street," Jimmy Elphinstone said to himself, "that's the game. That's the big game. There's the big, safe getaway." He sniffed with excitement as he thought about it. Wall Street held its influence on every man in the bank. The dead president had played *his* game and lost. McIntyre had played *his* game and lost. But these men had been foolish. They had played only with their own money. They had not had the illimitable backing that a bank could afford.

Now, Warner—— Jimmy shivered with admiration at Warner. Warner was the cashier. And Jimmy had found out just what Warner had done. McIntyre knew it. Others knew it in the bank. But it was a thing never whispered. Warner had taken ten thousand dollars out of the bank's coffers one morning; had *sold* Interstate common; had *made*—how much? Fifty thousand; one hundred thousand. Nobody knew.

"That," thought Jimmy Elphinstone, "is the game for me."

Jimmy Elphinstone, insignificant though he were, had within him the curious instinct of Alexander, of Napoleon. He felt, somehow, that he was a man of destiny; that his time must surely come. At any moment opportunity might present itself. He must be ready for it when it did. He was a mere boy whose salary had been raised bit by bit to nine dollars a week. And yet, on any day, he might become worth, by a turn of the hand, fifty thousand dollars; or even more. It was great—great—great.

Peter Westendorf, president of the People's Trust Company, had done one other thing besides forming a trust company with his confrères Donkersloot and Callahan. He had loaded up on Tri-State common. Interstate was one railroad with a tunnel. Tri-State was another road with a tunnel. The tunnels ran under rivers. These roads had bitten off more than they could chew. Interstate had passed dividend after

dividend. Tri-State was wavering, and yet—people didn't know. One-half of Wall Street said that Tri-State was gilt-edged. The other half merely wasn't sure.

But Westendorf was pretty sure—that he had made a mistake. He had bought all the Tri-State he could; and now he held it, quivering, shaking. He felt in his bones that he must get rid of it at once. But how, and to whom? There were two possibilities. One of them was Callahan. And one was Donkersloot.

"Say, bo," he would whisper to Callahan, on the street, in the club, or in a corner, "hist. Just come from New York. Got an insider. Dead straight. *Buy Tri-State.*"

"Sure?"

"Sure," repeated Westendorf, "sure enough to make me load up on it. As sure as death and taxes. Buy it. Go to Marchbank, Moore in town here and buy. Buy. Buy."

Callahan didn't buy, or if he did, he didn't buy enough, and Donkersloot was furnished with the sure, sure tip. It was on the trolley-car one morning that Westendorf furnished Donkersloot with *his* sure tip.

"Better'n greenbacks," Westendorf whispered to his partner. Donkersloot listened. He was not the only one to listen. There was another. This other was a boy—Jimmy Elphinstone, of the National Bank. He knew who Westendorf was. He knew who Donkersloot was. They were cronies—partners. And Westendorf, having found a gilt-edged thing in stocks, was letting Donkersloot in on it—glancing about fearfully the while lest some one else should hear.

"*Buy Tri-State.*" Jimmy Elphinstone sighed. It was a tip—a dead-sure tip.

The paying-teller's cage at the First National Bank had a door like every other bank cage. The door locked itself. If the teller stepped out of his cage, the door swung to behind him and locked him out. If he stepped in, the door swung to and locked him in. From without, it needed a key to get

in. The mere lifting of a latch from within released the catch. This automatic locking of the door was only valuable while there was money in the cage.

All day long during banking hours the door snapped itself shut. After four o'clock, however, while they were packing the money in the vaults, and while the cage was being emptied, somebody would stand and hold the door until the cage was empty. Then the teller, whose cage was also his own private office, would prop the door open an inch or so with a wad of paper, that he might come and go at will without the use of his keys. Hundreds of times Jimmy Elphinstone had seen this thing done. Hundreds of times hundreds and thousands of dollars had passed under his nose on their way to and from the vaults. But they were—as so much blank paper to him. *He* couldn't touch them and he knew it.

But there was one day on which the propping open of the teller's cage door became significant. It was on the afternoon of the day on which he had overheard the sure tip of Westendorf.

Jimmy Elphinstone, and he alone, had seen the small five-hundred package of bills slip from the teller's desk, and slink, like some green lizard, into the far corner of the cage. Jimmy watched that bundle as a cat watches a mouse. But he gave no sign. He watched the balance of the money tucked away in the big vault, watched while the tellers and the bookkeepers settled their accounts, watched the teller as he propped open the door to let himself in and out after the day's work, watched him wash his hands, adjust his cuffs, pull on his street coat and his overcoat, pull down his hat, seize his umbrella and take his leave. Jimmy Elphinstone waited patiently. He had a proposition that was *safe*. To all intents and purposes the teller's cage was innocent of cash. No one entering that cage would be suspected, not at this time of day. And Tri-State loomed in the distance like a mountain of pure gold.

Jimmy drew a long breath. Over in a far corner of the bank an assistant

bookkeeper was fixing up a difference. Johnson, the porter, was fixing up the front doors. From the president's room came the click of a typewriter. It stopped for an instant, but Jimmy didn't hear it stop. He merely sauntered boldly into the teller's cage, seized a bottle of ink and filled the teller's ink-well. Then, quite as boldly he strode into the corner of the cage and picked up the five-hundred-dollar package of bills. Stuffing them unconcernedly in his trousers pocket, he sauntered out.

As he passed through the door of the cage, he started. *A hand was laid upon his arm.*

In that one instant Jimmy Elphinstone saw, as in a flash, the county court-room. He saw the jury. He saw a prisoner. He heard the foreman: "Guilty, your honor." He heard his honor clear his throat. He saw everything but the face and form of the prisoner. Then he turned his head to see *whose hand was laid upon his arm.*

The face was the face of the Widdecombe girl. The hand was *her* hand. As their eyes met she started back. For one instant heredity had forced itself to the front in Jimmy's countenance. For one instant there looked forth upon the girl the eyes of the born criminal. She didn't know what it was, that expression. She didn't know that Cunningham was the father of Elphinstone. But she shivered.

"What are you going to do with that?" she queried. For an instant Elphinstone hesitated.

"What?" he queried, moistening his lips; "with—what?"

Then he wrenched his hand from his pocket, bringing with it the package of bills.

"With—this, you mean?" he said. She nodded.

"It's a hundred fives, isn't it?" she said.

"Y-y-yes," he stammered.

The watchful instincts of the bank were alive within her.

"And what were you going to do with it, Jim?" she asked.

Elphinstone gulped. "The teller dropped it in the corner," he explained.

"And—you?" She was quivering. Then, afraid to face the truth, she nodded.

"You were going to look it up until to-morrow?" she inquired.

Her eyes were upon him. To Jimmy Elphinstone it seemed as though they searched his soul. He wrestled with some tremendous impulse, and then surrendered to it.

"No," he said, "I was going to keep them, for myself."

"Steal them?"

He nodded. "Steal them," he admitted.

She gave a quick little gasp and held out her hand for the package. He passed it over. She took it gingerly and bore it to the assistant bookkeeper, who was out of hearing, away over in the corner. "Mr. Burt," she said, "here's five hundred that we've just found over here."

Burt, the assistant bookkeeper, smiled. "*Not in the cage?*" he queried. The girl nodded.

"That's one on Paul," said Burt. The next day he tossed them through the paying-teller's window. "One on you, Paul," he said.

At noon on that next day the paying-teller called to Jimmy Elphinstone. "Did you find this package of bills in my cage?" he queried.

"I did," said Elphinstone.

"Well, hang it," said Paul testily, "why don't you keep a thing like that quiet? Don't let the whole bank know. Next time it happens just tuck 'em in your pocket and take 'em home and bring 'em to *me*. Don't advertise the thing."

Three times that day Jimmy passed the Widdecombe girl. The third time he stopped her.

"What are you going to do to me?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered coldly, "*until the second time.*" She was passing on, when suddenly she turned, and her eyes filled and her chin quivered just as it had done when old Albertson had died.

"Jim—Jimmy," she said, suddenly,

jerkily, "I—I want you to be *good—good—*"

She went on, leaving him standing there. All that night Jimmy Elphinstone did not sleep.

"I've got to do the trick in some *safer way*," he told himself, "and I've got to be blamed careful with that girl." He shivered and then he sighed dolefully. "Gee, but I missed a chance. If I could only have bought Tri-State on that tip."

The next day he shivered more. *Tri-State suddenly went down and out of sight.*

"Gee, I must be *blamed careful*," he assured himself.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW MOVE.

Elphinstone sat, one evening, in the big parlor of the big old-fashioned boarding-house on the avenue.

"I feel tremendously flattered," he said; "Warner has just made me an assistant bookkeeper at twelve dollars a week."

Warner was the former cashier. He was the *new* president. The girl laughed. "Yes," she said; "he hasn't raised me. But he's raised himself to seventy-five hundred a year. Old Mr. Albertson was always satisfied with five thousand, but not Warner. *I hate Warner*," she added.

"Poor McIntyre," sighed Elphinstone.

"I should think so," she snapped vivaciously; "Warner has passed man after man over McIntyre's head. I like McIntyre."

"I like McIntyre," said Elphinstone, "and I don't like Warner either. I'm glad you don't like Warner and that you do like McIntyre."

"Why?"

Elphinstone flushed. "Because," he answered, "McIntyre's married and Warner isn't."

She laughed, but flushed too. "What difference does that make to *you*?" she queried.

"Does Warner like you?" he insisted.

"You *are* the silliest proposition," she returned.

"If Warner did like you, he'd have you," went on Elphinstone; "he could marry anybody, or do anything he wanted to. *You know that.*" Jimmy rose and stretched wide his arms. "There are two big things I want," he went on, with something hopeless in his voice, "things I'm afraid I'll never get."

"What are they?" the girl asked. She leaned forward and rested her chin upon her hands, her elbows on her knees. She liked Elphinstone. She liked to talk to him. Upon him there rested that strange thing that was part and parcel of herself—that unknown quantity: personal magnetism. And he was so young, so terribly raw; he wore his heart so constantly upon his sleeve. He was refreshing. She didn't know what lay underneath.

"One of the big things that I want," Elphinstone was saying, "*is—you.*"

She met his glance with frank and laughing eyes.

"I'm not big," she answered banteringly.

"You're one of the things," he persisted, looking *through* her and into a vista beyond, "and the other is this: I want to be *big*, like Warner—like Westendorf. I want to make money. Big money. I want to make a lot all at once. It can be done. Warner has done it. Peter Westendorf has done it. Why not I? Hang it," he suddenly exclaimed, "here I've been working in the bank—a bank, where there's loads of money. I've been there for months now, for years—yes, years—and what have I to show for it? Twelve dollars a week. What has McIntyre—married, with a family? Where do *we* get off? And when? That's what I want to know."

She touched him lightly, for an instant, upon the hand. "Whatever you do, Jimmy," she exclaimed, with some sort of mother-tone in her voice, "I want you to be good, to be honest; don't you see?"

"I see," he answered. But he made no promises. She didn't, couldn't know the settled purpose that was part of his,

inner consciousness—to make a big get-away some day. When he made it, it would have to be so very safe, that even *she* would not come to know the truth. This girl, whom he had persistently followed until she had become part of his life, had complicated matters. His purpose had become divided—twofold. And yet, his desire for a future with her had quickened his faculties, sharpened his wits, added to his motives. He was more than ever bent upon a coup, bent on doing for her—he had tucked Cunningham, his father, into the uttermost recesses of his mind—for her, the thing that she would give her life to prevent—possibly. And he must do it right. His great crime, to be committed for her, must be done without her knowledge. He was glad to think, even then, that the girl had been instrumental in saving him from the effects of that five-hundred-dollar steal.

Looking back upon it, that seemed to Elphinstone as a joke, but a terrible joke. It would have been a miserable fiasco. He would have been found out. He would have lost the money on the Street; he would have taken more; he would have slumped behind the bars as all the rest of the foolish fellows had. And the girl had checked him. That five-hundred-dollar find had been a god-send to him. It had made him trebly cautious. It had made him for the time being, painfully honest. And besides, somehow, it had given the girl her first great interest in *him*. That secret was *their* secret. The girl had taken him under her wing. She had saved him from temptation. He was well versed enough in human nature to understand that her act had made him, somehow, *hers*.

"I want you to be honest." She had said this to him a hundred times. He would have laughed aloud if he could have known then the limitations of the girl. Honesty—why, she was versed only in the rudiments of honesty. After all she was a woman. And when, months later, her real views and the whole of them were revealed to Elphinstone, he did laugh.

But now—— "I'll be honest," he assured her, "I'll be as honest as—*as Warner*, anyway. That ought to be enough."

It seemed to satisfy her. She didn't know about Warner's little deal with ten thousand of the bank's good money—the deal that had made him rich; the deal that had placed him in the president's chair at the First National. But she didn't like Warner. So she hedged.

"Be as honest as McIntyre," she said.

"Why? Because honesty is the best policy?" queried Elphinstone.

She hesitated for an instant. Then the luxury of her power upon him overcame her, and she flushed prettily once more and once more touched him on the hand.

"Because I want you to," she whispered gently.

Elphinstone drew a long breath. He did feel her influence strong within him.

"That's a go," he exclaimed, seizing her hand and holding it, "I'll be as honest as you want me to."

Months later he thought of this, and wondered vaguely how honest that might be.

A week later Elphinstone discovered that certain honesty wasn't the best policy. McIntyre's honesty was not, at any rate. McIntyre found it out himself. McIntyre and Warner had entered the bank together. Warner now was president—a capable president. McIntyre also was capable—*more* capable than Warner. Warner knew this, and didn't like it. He ought to have made McIntyre cashier. McIntyre was safe. But Warner was blinded by his own conceit. Months afterward, when Westendorf's trust company, a car of Jugger-naut, came on steadily, threatening to crush Warner and his bank, he really wished that he had retained McIntyre. But now he didn't want him. He sent for him. McIntyre had not been in the president's office three minutes before Miss Widdecombe came out, and stayed out, and sent in Elphinstone.

"Elphinstone," said McIntyre, "did you tell Warner that I had speculated some time ago in Interstate and lost?"

Elphinstone flushed. "You were the only man here who knew that, Jimmy," went on McIntyre.

"Yes, I did tell him, Mac," said Jimmy frankly, "I told him a day or two after old man Albertson died. I talked too much, those days. I told him. Yes."

McIntyre shook him by the hand. "It's all right, Jimmy," he said; "Warner is going to fire me because I speculated on the Street."

Warner smiled. "I am exactly right," he said; "it's too dangerous a practise."

McIntyre swung back upon him. "Why, you blamed——" he began. Then he stopped. "Don't go, Jimmy Elphinstone," he said; "I'm going to have this out with Warner. You told Warner something about me. I'll tell you something about him."

"What?" queried Warner. But he flushed nevertheless.

Jimmy Elphinstone only held out his hand. "Don't tell me anything, Mac," he said boldly, for he didn't like the littleness into which McIntyre's anger had betrayed him, "if it's about that ten-thousand-dollar steal of Mr. Warner's—why, almost everybody in the bank knows that."

"That's it," yelled McIntyre, "that's it. I bought Interstate with my own money—my own money, mind. I wouldn't touch—I wouldn't take five hundred dollars out of the bank's coffers." Elphinstone shivered. Warner merely smiled.

"And here," went on McIntyre, "Warner takes ten thousand."

"I borrowed it, Mac," said Warner.

"He steals it," repeated McIntyre, "steals it, and sells Interstate short. Don't even buy something that exists. Sells it. He's a thief and I'm an honest man. He's the president and I'm——"

Warner was unmoved. He looked at Elphinstone. He looked at McIntyre.

"Exactly, Mac," he said, in his oiliest tones, "that's just the point. I, who have speculated, know what it means. I happened to win out. If I had lost, I would have been grinding out a few

years up on the Hill. The bank would have been out ten thousand. There's the danger. This bank is going to cut it out, because the president of this bank knows what a terrible danger it is. Mac," added Warner, a gleam of satisfaction in his eye, "your month'll be up within the next ten days. I guess you'd better go." He sighed. "You're a good man, Mac," he said, "but I'm too blamed afraid that you'll go wrong."

McIntyre shook in his wrath. "And you, Warner?" he exclaimed.

Warner looked horrified. "I'm through," said Warner; "I wouldn't touch Wall Street now with a ten-foot pole. Elphinstone," he concluded sharply, "these things you heard here were due to Mac's outburst of temper. As it was you had to hear them. My experience is that everybody in a bank knows everything that happens. But if I were you I'd let the subject drop. Unless you prefer to go. That's all."

Elphinstone went with McIntyre to McIntyre's desk. "This is too blamed bad, Mac," he began.

But McIntyre wrinkled his forehead. "I'm not so sure about that, Jimmy," he said, "if it's got to come, it's well it came now. I've been thinking hard, lately. I want to make money, I don't want to make big money. I can't make money on the Street. I've got a wife and family. But I know of a business that's just creeping up into importance in New York. It's an occupation that hasn't opened up here. And yet we've got corporations here to beat the band; mergers; consolidations; capitalizations. Everything. This is a corporation State." He tapped his desk nervously. "We may have to starve for some time—but I can push my way. I can see it all. I can make these big people understand how they *must* have me. I can see my way clear. And I don't need a dollar for expenses. It's a good business—an honest business—a new business *here*. And if this prosperity keeps up——"

"What is this business?" queried Elphinstone.

McIntyre looked suddenly at Elphinstone. Then he pounded his desk soft-

ly. "By George," he said, "the very man. Elphinstone," he went on, speaking with the rapidity of a man who has made up his mind, "I've taught you all the bookkeeping that you know. I've taught you a whole lot. There's a whole lot more, but you can learn it—you do learn fast. I need a man, a good man. Not a man like Warner. I need an honest man. That's what I need. An honest man."

Jimmy sniffed. This sounded good. An honest man is needed where dishonesty would be very profitable. He began to see light.

"I'm blamed tired of this bank business, I can tell you," he complained to McIntyre.

"Then come with me, Jimmy," said McIntyre gleefully, "into this new scheme, boy."

"What is the scheme?" again queried Elphinstone.

"The scheme," said McIntyre, "is a legitimate business that will grow. It will bring us into contact with the biggest men in this State, with the biggest corporations in the State, with most of the real money of the State. We shall have the confidence of big men. We shall have power. We shall be able to step out of a business office and say: 'This concern is rotten,' or, 'That is good.' And in the end we'll make money—for, save the banking department, we'll be the first firm of the kind within the State."

"What is the business?" queried Elphinstone.

"Ah," went on McIntyre, his face aglow with the enthusiasm of an independent business man, "it's the business of an *expert accountant*. It takes a knowledge of books; of men; of markets; of business; it takes common sense. But it takes something more than that, Jimmy," he repeated solemnly, "if we go into this business—you and I—we've got to be as honest as the day is long."

Jimmy didn't know why *that* was necessary, but he liked the outlook, and he again assured himself, that if it was very necessary to be honest, it must also be very easy in that business to be dis-

honest—how or why dishonest he could not understand. What the opportunities were he did not know. But there was one thing he did know. He was sick of the bank. Something new meant something different. He turned to McIntyre.

"It's a go, Mac," he said warmly; "I'll go with you."

On his way to the water-cooler he met the girl. "Great Scott," he exclaimed, "how *can* I go?"

She was a part of the bank, and he couldn't bear not to see her every day.

He made a sudden resolution. That night he called at the big boarding-house upon the avenue, asked for her, found her.

"I've got a nerve," he told her, "and I'm as selfish as they make 'em. But I've got to make sure. Mac and I are going to leave the bank."

He was glad to note the sudden pallor on her face. It made things much easier. He went on speaking very rapidly. "I'm not going to call myself all kinds of names just on account of what I'm going to do, girlie," he said. "We're not living in a story-book, and things are different in real life. I'm a kid without a prospect. You know it. It's a matter of years, maybe. But some day—for you—I'm going to be *big*, like Warner. Some day *my* income'll be seventy-five hundred or over." He tugged at his waistcoat pocket. "I spent my last cent on that beauty girl," he went on; "look at it. Throw it back if you want to. But I love you, love you. And I'm going to ask you to marry me, when—— I want to own you. I don't want any mistakes. I want you to engage yourself to me. I want you, girlie girl."

She turned whiter for an instant. Then she slipped the ring slowly on her finger and rose and stepped toward him and caught him suddenly, about the neck. "I don't care if we never marry, Jimmy," she whispered, "I don't care what happens now, Jimmy—I love you, too."

She didn't know his father was the burglar, Cunningham.

CHAPTER VII.

WARNER, THE TEMPTER.

It was five o'clock. Elphinstone, expert accountant, of the McIntyre Certified Accountants, sat with his feet cocked up on his desk. The McIntyre Certified Accountants had been a living fact for months. For months, however, it had been almost dead; had done little save cock up its several feet on its several desks. It had waited patiently, as Elphinstone was waiting now, for the business that did not come. Small jobs there had been, of course, but not enough to live upon. McIntyre's saving had dwindled to a cipher. Elphinstone, a young man with the instinct of matrimony within him, found that matrimony and an empty purse do not speak as they pass by. He and the Widdecombe girl were waiting, waiting.

It was five o'clock. The door opened gently. A woman entered. Elphinstone dropped his feet to the floor and sat up straight, as became a certified accountant. Then he leaped to his feet.

"Girlie," he exclaimed. It was Irene Widdecombe. Her face was flushed; her voice tremulous.

"Jimmy," she said, "I've just come from the bank. I—I'm not going back. I want a job—*here*."

"*Here*," echoed Elphinstone, "*here*? Why, what's the matter at the bank?"

"It's—Warner," she choked; "I—I'm afraid I don't—suit—him. He—he wants somebody he can—*kiss*."

Jimmy Elphinstone paled for an instant. Then, for he saw how near the girl was to hysterics, he laughed aloud, and crossed to her and caught her in his arms.

"Good," he exclaimed, "and I want somebody here that *I* can kiss, too." He suited the action to the word. The girl laughed.

"I don't mind you," she admitted, "but—Warner. I can't stand Warner. Haven't you got a job here for me, boy?"

Elphinstone mused. "Well," he said at length, "if you can get along with three times the salary that McIntyre and I are getting, we can take you in."

"How much will that be, Jimmy?" she faltered.

"Three times ought is ought," returned the young accountant.

She placed her hand lightly on his shoulder. "I'll take my pay in kisses, Jimmy."

"Well," he said, "no. Not all of it. We've got a man here we can turn off and put you on." You've got to earn some money. It wouldn't be fair. I'll talk to Mac about it, and we'll put you on."

They did. And the advent of the girl seemed to bring with it good luck. It was two days after she was regularly employed that Westendorf of the People's Trust Company swung in and caught McIntyre, the head of the concern, alone, and talked to him for half an hour. Elphinstone had been out upon a small job, and when he came back McIntyre was dancing a jig for the benefit of Irene Widdecombe. He redoubled his efforts when Elphinstone came in.

"Our first big job, Jimmy," he announced.

"What?" queried Elphinstone. McIntyre beckoned Jimmy into his private office and shut the door. McIntyre knew his business. He wouldn't even tell the girl what it was all about.

"Jimmy," he whispered, "Westendorf of the People's Trust Company is going to buy the First National Bank."

"No!" exclaimed Elphinstone.

"Yes," returned McIntyre, "and it's up to us to examine its accounts, its securities, its general condition of health. Up to you and me, Jimmy. What do you think of that?"

Elphinstone laughed aloud. It was a job that not only promised ready money, it was not only a big job, but it was also a job that carried with it a sense of satisfaction. Already he could see himself and McIntyre strutting into the bank, ordering clerks about, calling for this and that, just as the bank examiners were wont to do. It was great.

But McIntyre was holding him by the sleeve. "Not a word of this to any one, Jim," he said; "it's private business. And besides that, we've got to

be thorough. Westendorf has *got to know*."

Inside of three days they were tackling the job. But if Elphinstone had expected that they would be met with any superciliousness on the part of Warner or anybody else in the bank, he was quite mistaken.

Warner met them at the door as they entered. Westendorf had told him they had been employed.

"Well, well, boys," he exclaimed, as he shook hands warmly, "this is like old times, old times. And I hear you chaps have made a great success in the accountant line, a great success. Come in."

McIntyre whispered to Elphinstone. "What does it mean?" he queried. Elphinstone shook his head. He had taken it for sheer good nature on the part of Warner. But McIntyre only sheered off mentally.

"What does Warner mean," he kept asking himself, "by this effusiveness?"

They started in. They *were* very thorough. It was well they were. There were dark and hidden places in the First National that would hardly stand the search-light glare.

At the end of the first four days McIntyre turned to Elphinstone as they left the bank one afternoon. "What do you think?" he queried.

Elphinstone shrugged his shoulders. "I'm clean surprised," he said; "I thought the First National was as prosperous as——"

Well, it wasn't prosperous. Its actual condition was far behind its outward appearance. Its condition was far behind its credit. It wasn't rotten. It was still sound. But it had fallen off—fallen off.

There were only three men who knew this. Warner was one. McIntyre was one. Elphinstone was one.

Westendorf didn't know—couldn't know; until they told him. And they hadn't told him yet.

McIntyre smiled as he thought about it. "There are two explanations, Jimmy," he said; "first, Warner has been bucking Wall Street. That's one. Second, Westendorf's Trust Company has

been bucking the First National. It has bucked to some purpose."

In another week they had concluded their thorough investigation.

"Well," said Warner cheerily, rubbing his hands, "how does she come out—what's the result, boys?"

McIntyre only shook his head. The report of McIntyre's Certified Accountants was for the eye of but one man—Westendorf. It was not for Warner. Warner only laughed and passed over the cigars. He wanted to see that report. Although, after all, he *knew*. He laughed again.

"I guess I know pretty much as much as you chaps do about my own bank," he said.

As they rose to go he plucked McIntyre by the arm. "Mac," he said, "come in my inside room a minute. I've got a relic there of twenty-five years gone by. You'll be interested in it. You'll remember it. This won't take a minute, Elphinstone."

Elphinstone nodded and passed on out of the bank. He sauntered slowly toward his office, expecting that McIntyre would overtake him. But it was fully fifteen minutes after his arrival at the office before McIntyre turned up.

"Anybody here?" queried McIntyre. Elphinstone shook his head.

"Miss Widdecombe?" persisted McIntyre. Again Elphinstone shook his head. His eyes softened.

"Miss Widdecombe," he smiled, "has been—kissed, and has gone home."

"We're alone, then."

"Alone."

McIntyre sank into a chair. "Warner didn't want to show me a blamed thing," he said.

"Gee," returned Elphinstone, "I thought that twenty-five-year-old relic was inside of a bottle. And he didn't even open a bottle, Mac?"

"Not even a bottle of ink," returned McIntyre. He closed his eyes until he looked through slits. "What do you think he wanted?" he inquired.

Elphinstone shook his head. "I give it up."

McIntyre brought his hand full force down upon the desk. "He *wanted to*

pay me five thousand flat for falsifying my report."

Jimmy Elphinstone sat up and took notice. A deep flush appeared upon his face. This thing had startled him.

"Five thousand—a—a—bribe!"

"Yes," said McIntyre.

"Considerable more than we're gettin' for this job," said Jimmy dryly. He tapped his fingers lightly on the blotting-pad. "Well, did you take it, Mac?" he asked.

"I guess *not*," returned McIntyre. "I'm an expert accountant. I'm not a bunco-steerer. It seems," he went on, "that Westendorf had supposed that the First National was in pretty fair shape even though he had pounded it. He didn't know what Warner had been doing on the Street. Warner wanted our report to find just about what Westendorf thought. I turned him down."

"Good," said Elphinstone. But that flush still remained upon his cheek. He drew a deep breath. For the first time in his life he was beginning to understand the *possibilities* of the accounting business. For the first time he began to see whither his destiny had led him. For months, in idleness he had cursed the hour when he left the bank and took up this new scheme with McIntyre. But now—he saw his way clear. *This* was in *his* line. He wanted to walk the streets and think about it.

"I guess I'll go," he said to McIntyre.

"Ring up Westendorf first," said McIntyre, "and tell him to come down here at once."

Elphinstone left. In half an hour Westendorf was closeted alone with McIntyre. McIntyre read and read and read.

"Gee-whiz, man," said Westendorf to McIntyre, "you're a brick. Why, I can buy that bank for a song, a song. Eh?"

McIntyre nodded.

"You've got me going," acknowledged Westendorf admiringly. "What a wonderful, wonderful thing an expert accountant is. Isn't he?"

"He is," admitted McIntyre. He didn't mention the little bribe that Warner had placed within easy reach.

Westendorf continued. "Now," said Westendorf, "this report's all right. Send in your bill and you'll get a check on the dot." He drew his chair up closer. "Now, McIntyre, boy," he went on, "*this* report is for *me*. That's O. K. and satisfactory. Now, look here. There's a couple of others in with me. Callahan and Donkersloot. They're going to get a slice of the First National. But in the ordinary course o' nature, it's only right that I, who do the work, should be looked after." He pushed his face close to McIntyre's.

"I wish," he said, "that you'd get me up a report that's about twice as good as that, just for Callahan and Donkersloot to read. Naturally they got to pay me more than I pay out for them."

McIntyre rose, a queer smile playing about his lips. It is fair to McIntyre to say that this sort of thing merely amused him.

"Mr. Westendorf," said he, "the McIntyre Certified Accountants never make but one report at a time. That report contains nothing but the facts."

"You can double your bill for this second report," said Westendorf.

McIntyre drew himself up. "Mr. Westendorf," he said, "I have already refused five thousand dollars to falsify this report to you."

"W-what?" yelled Westendorf. "Who offered it? Warner?"

"It's not quite any of your business," retorted McIntyre, "it's enough for you that I've got you a reliable report."

"Here, man," said Westendorf gently, "you treat your clients square. That's right. Be loyal to your clients. That's the whole thing, isn't it? Well, boy, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you six thousand to falsify this report to Donkersloot and Callahan. So there."

Fifteen minutes later Westendorf was driving homeward muttering to himself, and wondering what the dickens a certified accountant was made of, anyway.

"To think," he told himself, "that that idiot wouldn't take six thousand for a little thing like that. By George," he wondered, "maybe—maybe it's because Callahan and Donkersloot have already bought him up."

But they hadn't. McIntyre was a man without a price. But even McIntyre didn't know that in his own employ, walking the streets that night, that there was a man with a price. Elphinstone felt his pulse hammering.

"By George," thought Elphinstone, "this is the *real* game after all."

CHAPTER VIII.

IRENE WIDDECOMBE FALLS DOWN.

The Westendorf job advertised the McIntyre Certified Accountants among the men who knew. The news filtered out gradually, and the big men, who formerly had believed in the First National, who would have been willing to pay a big price for a bank like that, began to understand, through the underground knowledge they had received, that the McIntyre people had saved Westendorf thousands and thousands of dollars.

People came to know this just as they came to know that Westendorf had stuck Callahan and Donkersloot; just as they came to know that Donkersloot and Callahan suddenly had opened their eyes and found they had been stuck for years by Westendorf, and that they were being bled every day of their life. They deserted Westendorf and Westendorf groaned.

"This here wouldn't have happened," Westendorf told himself, "if McIntyre had only been loyal to me, his client. What did I have him for, if not to do what he was told? And to turn down six thousand too, at that."

Donkersloot and Callahan had been really necessary to Westendorf. Westendorf was loaded up now. He had a trust company and a bank upon his hands and needed all the backing he could get. The city called him a multimillionaire, but he often wished that the cool million which he really was worth was salted down into cold hard cash—often wished that he was out of the maelstrom. And this move of Callahan and Donkersloot worried him.

"I guess," he mused, "I'll have to take a little fall out of Wall Street to get square."

10

However that may be, the McIntyre Certified Accountants began slowly to prosper. Both McIntyre and Elphinstone were able to buy new suits of clothes, and by dint of careful calculation they were able to pay Irene Widdecombe her salary with a regularity that was appalling.

"We'll make it go, Jim," McIntyre said encouragingly, "I see my way clear now."

"And so do I," returned Elphinstone. When the *great opportunity* arrived it would find him ready.

When he came in one morning he found a fresh glow upon the face of Irene Widdecombe. "What's up?" he queried.

"Mac won't tell me," she said, "but it's a new job and a big one. I don't know what. But I know it's *big*."

Elphinstone pushed open Mac's private door, and sat down at the latter's desk.

"Well?" he queried.

McIntyre got up and locked the door. "Jim," he said, "the examination of the First National was a mere bagatelle—a drop in the bucket, nothing more. But what do you think of this: *Tri-State is going to merge with Interstate.*"

"Tri-State is going to merge with Interstate!" echoed Elphinstone. "That means practically that Tri-State is going to buy up Interstate." He seized a morning paper. "That won't be hard," he went on; "Interstate is only worth thirty-five. Interstate——" he mused, "that's what so many people bought, and went broke on, back there in the bank."

McIntyre groaned. "Didn't I go broke on it myself?" he said.

"Well, anyway, *I* didn't buy," went on Elphinstone. "So," he exclaimed, "Tri-State has employed *us* to examine Interstate? Good.

"And," he added to himself, but *not* to McIntyre, "I wonder how much Interstate will pay *me* to falsify reports."

Turning again to McIntyre, he spoke aloud. "Why don't Tri-State Railroad go into the market and buy up the stock? It's low enough."

"Well," said McIntyre, "they told me about that. In the first place, there's not enough for sale to get the full control. That's one thing. And Tri-State wants to be sure of the control. But that's not the main thing. The stock is thirty-five. Tri-State don't believe it's worth twenty-five. They want to get our report, throw it broadcast to the winds, force Interstate down to twenty or even fifteen, and scoop it in."

"That won't get them the control."

"No," said McIntyre, "but they've got an agreement with the management to get the control for just about what an investigation will show it to be worth. That's the best they could do. Interstate wouldn't name a figure. But Interstate will sell at a fair price. That price we've got to determine for Tri-State as near as we can. It's a big job, Jimmy. It's a hard job. It means millions to Interstate Railroad and millions to Tri-State, anyway you look at it. So far as we're concerned, we're employed by Tri-State Railroad, Jimmy."

As in the case of the First National purchase, only a few men knew of this proposed deal. Say three men of the inner circle of Interstate, about as many more on the inside of Tri-State, and two more, rank outsiders: Elphinstone and McIntyre. It was a big job, and the certified accountants had their work cut out for them. They had to take on new men; every man sworn to secrecy, but this new force was so cleverly arranged that no one of them—no one but McIntyre and Elphinstone, could know all the details of the examination.

But Elphinstone, working night and day, knew *all* those details and he knew something else, before he was three-fourths through the job.

He knew this: *Interstate, now listed at thirty-five, was worth seventy-five if it was worth a cent.*

The night that he was *sure* of it, he called on Irene Widdecombe at the big boarding-house on the avenue. It was a mighty secret this. It was a secret that three men of the Interstate had carried about with them for months. Interstate knew that it was *worth* seventy-five. But it hadn't said so. Not

much. Interstate had kept itself down to thirty-five consistently. For the very thing that Interstate was driving at was to have Tri-State buy it out, and take it in. And it wasn't until Tri-State had entered into that indefinite contract to pay Interstate what Tri-State found it to be worth in dollars and cents, upon a fair, square valuation, that the three men in Interstate had come to breathe easily. And Tri-State's own experts, the McIntyre Certified Accountants, were finding this out, slowly at first, rapidly now—that Interstate was worth, not thirty-five, not twenty-five, not fifteen—but seventy-five. Not a dollar less.

To Elphinstone, who had come to understand the wonder called Wall Street, the importance of the fact was very clear. He was big with its importance when he called on Irene Widdecombe that night. So big, that contrary to all rules and regulations, and sealing her secrecy with a kiss, he told her about it.

"What do you think of that?" he said. And then he leaned back and watched her. She was clever. He could see that her mind was working with logical regularity.

"Why," she gasped, "then the stock will go up—up—up."

Elphinstone nodded. "There is not the slightest doubt about it," he commented, "not the slightest doubt about it."

"It might go to par?" she faltered.

"It's bound to go to sixty-five," he said.

"And now it's thirty-five," she went on.

"It'll go thirty points higher, maybe fifty, maybe sixty—maybe the Street'll run it up clear out of sight. Who knows? There's quite a lot of loose stock to be bought."

Irene Widdecombe clapped her hands. "If—Jimmy"—her voice trailed off into ecstasy—"Jimmy—if we could only buy Interstate at thirty-five—"

Elphinstone started dramatically. He rose.

"What?" he exclaimed, as one horror-stricken.

She glanced up at him in a startled

way. "I say," she went on, "what if we could buy at thirty-five and sell at seventy-five? Wouldn't it be great?"

Elphinstone's mind was attuned to this idea. There was no doubt about it. But he laughed to himself. *He* was a criminal. He knew it, felt it. He would make big money some day. He would make it by crime; or by moral turpitude; by a breach of trust. He would make it safely, if possible. But he would make it.

But this girl—he knew and felt that her principles were as far removed from his principles as the east is from the west. He had never forgotten the shocked expression on her face that day when she had caught him *stealing*, yes, stealing that five-hundred-dollar bunch of bills. And yet, now, womanlike, unknown to herself, her inner consciousness all *unconscious*, she was ready to *steal*—yes, steal, all she could lay her hands upon. She couldn't see it. Jimmy could. His eyes were always open.

"If you had a thousand dollars," he asked, "what would you do?"

"I'd buy, buy, buy Interstate," she said.

"Why?"

"Because of what I've heard from you, Jimmy."

"Because I told you—and what I told you was in confidence."

Still she didn't see. "Of course," she answered glibly, "why not?"

"I'm sworn to secrecy," returned Elphinstone, "and so are *you*."

"What difference does that make?" she protested. "We wouldn't tell anybody, would we? We'd only go and buy."

Elphinstone was glad of this. It would make things easier later on. For he saw that *his* paths lay somewhere in the realms of high finance. And yet he *knew* that this girl didn't realize what she was saying. He wanted somehow to give her a jolt—not too big a jolt; just wanted to test her, to see if she would hold out; to see whether her sensibilities were reasonably blunted.

"Why, girlie," he exclaimed, "then *you* would do something that McIntyre wouldn't do himself."

She passed her hand across her eyes. "I don't understand," she said uncertainly.

"McIntyre has got a thousand dollars," said Jimmy; "*he* wouldn't buy Interstate, though he *knows* it's good as gold—and quick—and safe—— He wouldn't, don't-you see? *This* is a confidential matter. Understand?"

"Of course," she returned, "but he needn't *tell* anybody, need he? All he has to do is—*buy*."

And *this* was the girl who had put her hand upon his arm and looked into his soul when he had been about to steal five hundred dollars. Now, when he would *steal*, yes, *steal* thousands if he could, she stood urging him on. But he still played with her tantalizingly.

"McIntyre wouldn't do it," he protested.

"I don't see why," she reasoned.

But next morning she was at the office when he reached there, waiting for him.

"Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy," she exclaimed, "I've figured it all out. McIntyre is right, right. Oh, I would have been a thief, a thief. I was blind. I've just begun to see. A *man* would have seen that right away. But a woman. Jimmy," she pleaded, "*you* won't buy any Interstate, will you?"

"*I won't*," returned Elphinstone positively. He turned out his pockets.

"I won't," he repeated gently, "because I haven't got a cent to buy it with."

"Go along," she said; "you wouldn't buy it if you had."

Jimmy laughed again. Wouldn't he? This girl didn't yet know what was running in his brains. She didn't know that up in the State prison—Jimmy had never told her. He shivered. He wondered after all, whether it would ever be necessary for her to know. But he sighed.

"By George," he said, "there's not a chance to get bribed over at the Interstate offices. I wish I had five thousand cash to buy Interstate at thirty-five. Gee-whiz."

Jimmy Elphinstone was virtuous because he didn't have the cash. McIn-

tyre was virtuous even though *he* had the cash. And the girl—well, she *had* stumbled, but she had made a neat recovery after all.

"Oh, for a big, safe getaway," sighed Jimmy Elphinstone, "and *then*, I'll marry Irene Widdecombe. And then, we'll *begin to live*."

CHAPTER IX.

A FINE NIGHT FOR CRIME.

Next day while he was still at work on Interstate, finishing up the big job, McIntyre swung in upon him.

"Elphinstone," said McIntyre breathlessly, "you've got to finish up here as soon as possible. There's been a crash. A dozen trust companies in New York are under suspicion. There's going to be trouble right in town here—just the banks, that's all. But any minute our whole force may be needed. Understand?"

"Sure," replied Elphinstone, "leave me one man and take the rest. I'll close this out." He wanted to stay there to be sure that there was no mistake. He wanted to *know* that Interstate, even through a panic, would still soar, because Interstate had the goods. He felt sure that it would rise to seventy-five. He knew that in ordinary times it would have gone to one hundred and seventy-five. He finished up, thoroughly but hastily—he and his man.

And that very night an assistant superintendent of banks called up McIntyre on the phone. "McIntyre," said the assistant superintendent of banks, "do you know that the People's Trust Company in your town is as weak as water?"

McIntyre gasped. "Westendorf's trust company?" he queried.

"Sure," returned the assistant superintendent of banks, "at least we think it is."

"No," exclaimed McIntyre, "I thought it was as good as gold."

"McIntyre," went on the assistant superintendent of banks, "we haven't got a moment to lose. We ought to put a crew in on that trust company to-morrow, and we haven't got a man with a

foot loose. We're up to our necks. You've got to let me have a man. Say, McIntyre, I want an *honest* man. You understand? One that's above. Well, to tell the truth, we're afraid of Westendorf, the president of the People's Trust. Your man has *got* to be above suspicion."

"All right," said McIntyre, "I'll put a man and a crew in there to-morrow. I've got a man such as you say you want. His name is Elphinstone."

"Good," said the other man, as he rang off.

Elphinstone was put into the People's Trust Company next day. It took him three days to finish there. At the end of that time he stalked into the office of Westendorf. He had never met Westendorf face to face. He had seen him many times. The nearest he had even been to him was on the day that Westendorf had testified against his father up there at the court-house. In the examination of the First National, that Westendorf had purchased and had merged with the People's Trust, McIntyre, and not Elphinstone, had transacted all business with Westendorf. But now Jimmy Elphinstone met Westendorf face to face.

"Mr. Westendorf," he said, after he had closed the door, "your securities are about half a million shy." He paused, then went on. "I've got to turn you down, unless you've got something more behind this trust company. I'm going to call up the State superintendent right away."

Westendorf thrust out his hand. "Don't do it," he exclaimed, "I stand behind this bank. I've got twenty thousand shares of United States Food Company in my safe up at the house." He smiled. "Like everybody else," he said, "I've been dabbling in Wall Street, and I dabbled to some purpose. Ever hear of U. S. Food?"

"United States Food," returned Elphinstone, "sure. Twenty thousand shares. They ought to be good." He seized a Wall Street edition of the daily paper, and scanned its columns. United States Food was quoted at forty-six. He nodded.

"That ought to pull you through," said Elphinstone. He looked at his watch. It was late, long after closing time. Certified accountants took no note of time, nor, indeed, did their squirming victims.

"Come up to my house," said Westendorf. He hustled Elphinstone into his motor-car, and up they sped.

"We're an hour or so too late for supper," said Westendorf; "we'll stop in at the club and get Raphael to put us up a meal."

They stopped at the club and had a meal such as Raphael alone knew how to put up. Elphinstone sniffed with excitement at the luxury and novelty of it all. It was his first close acquaintance with riches. Hitherto money had seemed to him a thing that would lead merely to an endless round of gaiety; but now he began to see its real significance; the *comfort* that it brought; the standing among men that it furnished; the ease of it; the power——
It was great.

"Now," said Westendorf, "we'll go up to the house."

Elphinstone shivered as he entered that big house. He wondered vaguely just where his father had entered, so many years before. How many years was it—my great, years! Why—he shivered again. The old man's time was almost up. And *he*, Elphinstone, had never yet made that big, quick, safe getaway. He hadn't a dollar to show for all these years. He hadn't done anything. He hadn't married Irene Widdecombe. He was a cipher—a non-entity. He hadn't even been a good and steady burglar like his old man.

"Come right up-stairs," said Westendorf.

They went up. There was the big safe. That was the thing his old man had tried to tackle. The testimony came back clearly to his mind. He recalled how Westendorf had testified in open court about it. It was right in front of that safe that the old man had been caught.

And now, Elphinstone sat down in front of that big safe. "Have a cigar," said Westendorf. They smoked a cigar

apiece in silence. They were jaded, weary, these two men. Elphinstone had been working day and night. Westendorf had worried day and night. Finally Elphinstone waved his hand.

"If you don't mind, I'll take a look now at those securities," he said, "and you'll have to indorse them to your trust company, so they'll be part of the assets in dead earnest, don't you see?"

"Oh, of course," conceded Westendorf.

He opened the big safe and tossed a bundle of certificates in front of Elphinstone.

"Just count 'em up to be dead sure," he said.

Elphinstone counted. "Twenty thousand shares in all," he conceded. Then he stopped and rose.

"Why, why," he gasped, glaring at Westendorf, "these are *Universal Food Concern* certificates of stock."

Westendorf braced himself. "Well?" he queried coolly.

"Well," returned Elphinstone, "you told me they were *United States Food Company*, not *Universal Food Concern*."

Westendorf still eyed him coldly. "Well?" queried he, "what's the difference?"

"Difference," snorted Elphinstone, "you know as well as I do. *United States Food* is worth forty-six. *Universal Food* is down to two with no market for it even at that figure. That's all. And these are *Universal Food*."

Westendorf never moved a muscle of his face. He regarded the younger man calmly and kept puffing leisurely on his cigar. Finally he rose and stalked back to his safe. He took from it a package of bills—good money. Elphinstone counted it.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars," he said. He shook his head. "But man," he protested, "you're shy half a million. This isn't half a million. This'll never get you out."

"No," laughed Westendorf, "but it'll heal the difference, won't it?"

Elphinstone was puzzled. "What do you mean?" he queried.

"Mean?" answered Westendorf, "I

mean that the twenty-five thousand dollars cash is for *you*. Now look here, young man," he went on, "you know that if I have a week or two I can turn around and get things straightened out. You know that if you report my trust company all right, it'll take more than two weeks to find that we're all wrong, and by that time we'll *be* all right. It's a matter of public confidence, that's all. Look here, you represent the State superintendent, don't you? He relies on you, don't he?"

Elphinstone nodded. Westendorf went on. "And your report, whether it's good or bad, goes with *him*, don't it?"

Again Elphinstone nodded. "Then," said Westendorf, "tuck those bills away in your vest pocket. Twenty-five thousand. Nobody will ever know. Everything will come out right. And if it *should* come out wrong, which ain't likely, why you could lay it all on me. You could charge *me* with fraud or legerdemain, or anything you like, in palming off Universal Food upon *you*. You would only be guilty of a mistake. *You* couldn't be hurt. And you've got twenty-five thousand to the good. See? Now, be good. Just O. K. this stuff. I'll send it down to the bank and tuck it away in the vaults. Meantime I'll work things out. See if I don't. And you'll be twenty-five thousand dollars ahead of the game. I'll bet that's going some."

Elphinstone looked the other man squarely in the face. Beads of perspiration stood out on Westendorf's forehead. He was under tremendous strain. And yet his hand never shook. Neither did Elphinstone's as he rose, leaving the bills still upon the table.

"Mr. Westendorf," he said wearily, "I'm dog-tired. I've worked and worked and worked. Will you let me lie down somewhere, just for an hour or two—it's half-past two o'clock in the morning just as it is—until I can—*decide*?"

There was method in all this. Elphinstone didn't want to leave this man or this house. Not just yet. He wanted time.

"Sure," said Westendorf. He touched

a bell. A little Japanese servant entered. "Shiosuke," said Westendorf, "show this gentleman to a spare room on the next floor."

Shiosuke nodded. And Elphinstone stepped into a dainty room, into whose like he had never stepped before. *Luxury—this was luxury*. It was the kind of luxury for which he was destined—luxury for himself and for Irene Widdecombe when she should become his bride. *Luxury*—The blood rushed into his brain. But he dropped wearily upon a couch.

"Shiosuke," he commanded, in the tone of one who commanded his own servant, for he felt that he was made for this sort of thing, "wake me at five. I'm played out, but *I must* be waked at five." Shiosuke nodded and withdrew. Elphinstone, who had closed his eyes, now opened them. He was not there to sleep. He was there to think.

"*Twenty-five thousand dollars*," he murmured to himself. He smiled. It wasn't the mere twenty-five thousand that attracted him. It was the use to which he would put it.

"Interstate at thirty-five," he murmured dreamily. He knew well what he could do with it. He could buy Interstate on margin at thirty-five—or below that, for Interstate was still going down. And inside of a week—a *week*—it would go to sixty-five—to seventy-five—to *par*. He knew it, saw it; knew that it was safe.

In one week, *he*, Elphinstone, alone, unaided, could be worth *two hundred and fifty thousand dollars*—a quarter of a million. He almost laughed aloud in glee as he thought of it. He and Irene Widdecombe would marry—yes, *they* would have a Japanese servant, too. There would be no blot on their happiness—*except his old man*. Yes, he would be a blot—an ex-convict—a common burglar. Elphinstone almost hated the old man as he thought about it. What business had he, a common burglar, to be Elphinstone's father? But he dismissed the subject with another shiver.

"All that I've got to do now," said Elphinstone to himself, "is to go down—

stairs and tell Westendorf I'll take that twenty-five thousand dollars. That's all. Clever! Well, I should smile. What was the old man, to me?"

Yes, the Great Opportunity was there. He was ready for it. He began to think again about the old man—a thing that crept in upon him willy-nilly. A burglar, a bold, common, dare-devil burglar. That was the old man. A common criminal. As for Elphinstone, well, *he* would be guilty of a breach of faith or so, and of taking a bribe—a few stockholders on the one hand, a few depositors on the other, would suffer. But the law wouldn't touch him. Old Westendorf was game; Westendorf could be depended upon. That much was sure. Old man Cunningham, a burglar, risked his life, other people's lives for a few hundreds. Young Jim Elphinstone, clever financier, would get away with thousands and thousands; committing a great legitimate crime. And the more he thought about it, the more he was certain he had to do it, for Irene. A fellow had to have money nowadays to marry on. And the best was none too good for Irene.

Irene—he found himself shivering once more. Once more he saw himself stuffing a roll of bills, five hundred dollars' worth, into his pocket; once more he saw that girl looking down into his soul—

"Irene!" he exclaimed, half aloud.

In an instant, as by some miracle, everything was blotted from his mental vision save this girl and what she meant to him. He rose to a sitting posture. He crept across the room. There was a dim night-light at the dresser. He peered into the mirror and glanced at himself. Beads of perspiration were standing out upon his forehead, just as they had stood out upon the forehead of old Westendorf below.

"Oh, hang it all," he groaned uncertainly.

Then suddenly he caught sight of the bedroom telephone that hung upon the wall. He strode to it swiftly, and tore the receiver almost violently from the hook.

"Central," he whispered gently, very gently. Then a smile played upon his features. Central had answered. The connection, then, had been direct.

"Give me 3868—9 Monroe, central," he continued softly. There was a long wait. Finally a sleepy voice answered at the other end.

"Is that *you*, Mac?" he inquired. It was.

"I apologize for calling you up at your house this time of night, or morning, Mac," he continued, "but I'm just through. Say, get this *right*, will you? Get it right and report it straight to the superintendent in the morning. Do you hear me?"

"Sure," answered McIntyre, now wide-awake at the other end of the wire.

Elphinstone drew a long breath. "Say, whisper, Mac," he then went on: "*the People's Trust Company and Westendorf are rotten to the core.*"

At five o'clock that morning Westendorf, sitting in his own bedroom in his pajamas, rang for Shiosuke.

"Don't forget to wake up that accountant, Shiosuke," he commanded.

Shiosuke nodded and crept up to the next floor and entered the spare room where Elphinstone had lain.

Shiosuke entered softly. Then he uttered a little cry and ran down again to Westendorf and hauled that gentleman up-stairs.

"You see?" said Shiosuke. Westendorf looked.

"By thunderation," exclaimed Westendorf, glancing aghast about the empty room, "the confounded young idiot! He's given us the slip."

He was quite right. The bird had flown, *without* the twenty-five thousand in cold hard cash.

CHAPTER X.

TWO MEN OUTSIDE OF JAIL.

"Irene," said Elphinstone a month later, "having turned down a chance to make a quarter of a million—"

"Thank Heaven that you did," exclaimed the girl.

"Having done that," said Elphinstone, "I desire to say that if you think you can live in a six-room flat——"

"Oh," she answered, "I thought we were going to live in two rooms on a back alley. A six-room flat? That's not so bad."

"It was two rooms—before," answered Elphinstone, "but McIntyre has just made me a new offer——" He pulled out an envelope.

"That's perfectly lovely," said the girl, reading McIntyre's letter. Elphinstone drew forth another letter.

"The State superintendent," he went on, "has just offered me a job——"

"You can't take both," she answered, aglow at this great popularity of Elphinstone.

"I'm not going to take either," he returned. "I'm going to do better. I'm going to work on a bang-up proposition for a man named Westendorf."

"The man that——" she began.

He nodded. "That's the man," he said, "and I've got an appointment with him right now."

He left the girl and sped to Westendorf's house. It was still the same. Still was Shiosuke much in evidence. And there was Westendorf.

"I got your letter," said Westendorf, "accepting that job I offered you. But I wanted to see you. I wanted to be sure you—*understood*. I never was in such a hole as I was that night. It was horrible. You know why. I was responsible for the trust company's investments. You know as well as I do that State prison faced me on that night."

Elphinstone held up his hand. "I never understood just *how* you pulled the People's Trust Company out of its predicament, after my adverse report. I thought you were done for, sure."

Westendorf groaned at the recollection of that night. "Chance and nothing else," he answered. "I had twenty-five thousand dollars cash. I was desperate next day. I went down to Wall Street and plunged, against all rules, blindly, carelessly, trusting to luck." He sighed again. "I just happened to strike it right, that's all."

"What did you sell?" queried Elphinstone.

"Sell?" laughed Westendorf, though there was a note of sadness in his tone, "didn't sell. If I had acted like the other wise men I would have sold. But I was a fool, and that saved me. I bought—*Interstate*."

Elphinstone started. "You bought Interstate," he returned slowly; "how did you know?"

"I didn't know," said Westendorf truthfully, "I was blind, I tell you. I plunged recklessly. My broker said, 'Sell.' I said, No, buy. He bought—Interstate. Just a stroke of luck. Interstate's up at one hundred and five and still going." He shivered. "Bless it," he said, "it kept me out of jail, and I'm out for good."

He took a deep breath. Elphinstone smiled. "Mr. Westendorf," he said, "you didn't know, did you, that I *knew* about Interstate *that night*, and that, knowing it, I *didn't* take your twenty-five thousand dollars?"

"Phew," gasped Westendorf, "and you could have made half a million most, on margin! Well, well—Elphinstone," he said, his voice almost breaking, "I want you. I want to get back to the good old times. I want to be just a common, ordinary good millionaire, not a bad multimillionaire. I'm tired of being a shark. I'm tired of having sharks about me. I want *you*. I want you because I'm sure you're honest, and I know you know all that there's to know about business. I don't know what I'm going to do, but it's going to be legitimate. I'm going to make something and sell it for what it's worth. I'm going to do something and charge just what it's worth. I'm going to lend money and charge just ordinary interest. I'm tired of making a whole lot of nothing out of just a little bit of nothing." He held out his hand. "I want a man, who knows—and *cares*—to keep me out of holes—to keep me out of jail. I'm rich and decent once again. I want you to keep me so."

Ten days later a man stepped up and touched Elphinstone upon the arm. Elphinstone turned and looked upon the

man, a man, cold, shivering, gray, gaunt, with an unwonted pallor on his face.

"I been shadowing you, Jim," said this man; "it's me, come back."

Elphinstone glanced at him for one instant, shivered for an instant. And then the old love surged over him.

"It's the old man," he said, almost gleefully.

"Don't let 'em see you with me, Jimmy," whispered the old man; "it won't do."

Elphinstone grabbed the old man by his coat-collar and hustled him on a car. He didn't want to think about the things he had to do. He merely wanted to do them. At a corner upon which in the middle of large grounds stood a big house, they alighted, and Jimmy dragged the old man with him. When they reached the stone steps the old man started back.

"What's this, boy," he exclaimed, "the third degree?"

"The third degree?" queried Elphinstone. The old man nodded and pointed to a window. "There's where I went in," he said.

Elphinstone didn't answer. He merely rang the bell. Shiosuke appeared.

"Tell Mr. Westendorf I want to see him," he said.

Westendorf came down and glanced wonderingly upon the small group. Instinctively the burglar fell to the rear. He had not forgotten that onslaught of years before. Westendorf ushered the two into the room with the big safe.

"Mr. Westendorf," said Elphinstone, "there's something that you've got to know. One other thing. This man is my father. His name is Cunningham."

Westendorf knew him through all his age and all his pallor. He started back.

"Cunningham, the burglar!" he exclaimed. They all stood silent for an instant and gazed upon the big safe.

"I ought to have told you all about it long ago," said Elphinstone, "but now, you've got to know."

Westendorf nodded soberly. Then suddenly he drew up a chair and motioned Cunningham the burglar into it.

"You've just come out?" he queried. "I sent you up. You've been in jail for years." He stopped and held his hand across his face for one instant.

"How does it seem up there?" he said at last.

Cunningham the burglar worked himself into a mild fury. "How does it seem?" he asked. "My heavens, Jimmy, don't you, nor you either"—this to Westendorf—"don't you never do anything against the law. Don't you do it. Not even if it's clever; not even if it's safe. I ought to have written you about that. Don't never do it. For jail is——"

Westendorf groaned. He had been a good deal nearer to it than the burglar could imagine.

"Tell me all about it," he requested. "For," he added to himself, "I want to find out what I have escaped."

Elphinstone left them there, two former criminals, with their heads close together. He stole away. He had one other thing to do. He must do it at once. Thirty minutes later he was doing it. He was telling Irene that his father was a burglar. It was the hardest thing in life he had to do. But upon her face the glow of perfect happiness appeared and settled there. In her eyes was a new light of understanding.

"Now I understand," she said, in a tone of relief, "why you tried to steal that five hundred that day in the bank. It was something that I couldn't reconcile with you. It's the only thing that ever bothered me. Now I know it wasn't you. It was your blood."



Jack Bellamy, Lawbreaker

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Boss of the Two-pole Pumpkin," "Pirates of the Range," Etc.

IV.—GONE BUT NOT FORGOT

The persistent fate that gets Jack Bellamy into all sorts of exciting scrapes seems only to increase his naturally large bump of humor. Even in moments of danger, when his very life is at stake, he simply can't help playing a good joke on the minions of the law, with all due respect to law itself. For, although appearances are against him, Jack is anything but a Bad Man at heart. This complete story is one of the best of a popular series.

(A Complete Story)



O you know, I've got a notion to change my cognomen so it'll line up more with my luck. I sure do love to have things harmonize, and seeing I can't somehow seem to change my luck any to speak of, it looks like a good idea to change my name. What I've been thinking of calling myself permanent is "Calamity Jack"; I did use that brand to designate myself temporary, not a hundred years since, and it fit the case fine. And as the story-writers say, "Thereby hangs a tale"—and I'm going to tell you about the tale right now.

After that crooked deal I got over in Idaho, I hazed myself back into Montana; not the part of it where I was known much, but as close to it as Butte. And there I dubbed around for two or three weeks trying to make myself believe it looked like home. But it didn't, though—not what you can notice. Butte is a miner's and prospector's town, and I ain't that breed. I'm straight cowman and used to the feel of a horse be-

tween my knees, and the smell of grass country.

What I get hungriest for is to see the sky-line pushed back so you can fill up your system with Montana air without making a dent in the horizon or scraping it with your elbows when you turn around; I do amazingly hate a little world. In Butte you can't look at the sky-line without kinking your neck, because the horizon is straight up, and I hate that. When I want to see the sun say howdy in the morning I like to look at it from a distance; and not from the bottom of a well, as you might say.

So, whilst you can get in Butte all the devilment you've got the price for, I didn't take much shine to it. It done me one good turn, though. I set into a game there one night about seven, and got up out of my chair at two next morning eight hundred and fifteen dollars winner. You don't strike it that way very often, and it looked to me like a fine place to cash in and quit; which I done immediate and never went back to spoil the fun by losing it all to the house.

With that much money in my jeans, I got gay with myself and life didn't look none serious to speak of, and being called a bandit and outlaw and man-eating Bad One looked to me kinda like a joke. I watched the sun set high on a mountain ridge, next day, and thought about it getting along toward shipping-time, up in the north edge of the State, and how the wind wouldn't be smoked like a ham, and smelling like future torment, the way it done at that time and place.

Thinking about a thing you like will make you want it like sin—more especially when it ain't either practical nor yet safe to get it—and it wasn't long till I was pining for the range like any fool cayuse that's never been halter-broke. Of course, I ain't saying that the only cow-range lays in northern Montana, nor that I couldn't go south and find shipping-time just the same, or a wind that smells good and clean in your nostrils. Still, at the same time, I'm willing to be put down as saying that little old Montana has got the best brand of range and cowmen, and that there ain't any place on God's earth I would rather live and die in.

So that night I mounted a passenger-train with a ticket to Fort Benton, and no stop-over privileges asked for or wanted. It was a fool thing to do—I'm willing to admit all that. It was moseying deliberate into the lion's den and asking to have a look at his back teeth, as yuh might say. But I will own I had a kinda hankering to find out on the spot just how bad I was, and how much of a bandit I really was supposed to be; yuh can't always go much on what the newspapers say, for I've noticed they sure do love to tell it scarey. Anyway, I knew for a fact that I hadn't never done nothing so awful blood-curdling, and I still felt qualified to look my fellow men straight in the eye.

The worst I'd done, according to my way of looking at it, was rolling that deputy sheriff down-hill—and still, at the same time, it kinda struck me as the best all-round act I'd ever committed. But, of course, he was an officer, and

his person supposed to be sacred from violence and disrespect. But he sure had it coming, and I could've killed him but didn't—which ought to count some in my favor. Rolling down-hill hadn't ought to be fatal to nobody.

A little after daylight I got off the train and ambled down the platform indifferent and gazed off at the hills pensive till the bunch had gone back down to the town. I wasn't going to make my arrival none conspicuous if I could help it, and it looked like a good idea to walk down unobtrusive, and get the lay of the land before I begun to cut any perceptible swath, as the grangers say.

So when I turned with a cigarette in my face and sauntered back to the door of the waiting-room, humans was scarce and hard to find. First thing my eyes lit on was a lemon-colored notice tacked up where it made easy reading, and the wind whipping one corner where it had broke loose from the picket-pin. I walked over casual and took a good look at it, and this is how the thing read off:

\$500.00 REWARD!

A reward of \$500.00 will be paid by the State of Montana for the body, DEAD OR ALIVE, of Jack Bellamy, OUTLAW. Last seen in Valley County, and supposed to have gone west. Description: Height, 6 ft. 1 inch, straight, square-shouldered. Weight, about 175 lbs. Hair, brown and inclined to curl. Eyes, dark hazel; has habit of looking straight at speaker rather keenly; eyes often seem to laugh when rest of face is sober. Habitually smooth-shaven. Complexion, clear, smooth, tanned brown. No scars on face or hands. Occupation, cow-puncher; will probably work at breaking broncos; is an expert rider.

Any information leading to arrest will be paid for when proven correct. Communications should be sent or taken to the sheriff of Valley County, or his deputy.

Now, what do yuh think of that? And me coming back ready to forgive and forget and let bygones be bygones and malice toward none! I read it over twice, and the more I read the sorer I got. I'd just got to the "No scars on face or hands" on the third round, and thinking there'd likely be some considerable scars visible on the jasper that framed up that same document if I

ever met up with him, when a hand come down easy on my shoulder. My gun-hand dropped sudden to my six-shooter; I sure do hate to have anybody sneak up on me behind when I ain't looking.

"Go easy, pardner," the fellow remarks in my ear. "They've sure got yuh down fine, ain't they? but I ain't needing five hundred dollars right bad at present, so you're dead safe—as far as I'm concerned."

I looked him over thorough, and I will say that whilst he was good enough looking from a general standpoint, still at the same time I wasn't none stuck on his appearance, though if I was broke and you offered me ten dollars for my reason, I reckon I'd stay broke. It sure was a case of "I do not like thee, Doctor Fell," with me. But the fellow seemed to have me tagged, all right enough.

"I wasn't worrying none about it," I says to him kinda distant and haughty. He didn't seem to take offense, though.

"Was yuh aiming to go down into town?" he asks, looking me over like I'd done him. "Uh course, it ain't my funeral, but I'd kinda lay low, if I was in your place. There's men down the hill there," he says, "that need five hundred plunks bad and ain't so darned particular how they gets it."

I looked down at the town and could see where he might easy be right about it, and I told him so. He seemed to want to be human and decent, for a fact, and I'd no call to be nifty and none fastidious.

"Sure, that's right," he says. "But if yuh want a meal and to hang around a day or so without being conspicuous, come on over to camp with me. Me and my brother has got a pack outfit and camp just out beyond the tunnel. I walked into town on the track, and we can go out the same way. Want to come?"

"Don't you think yuh ought to think two or three times before asking a real, bony-fido outlaw and bandit to sup with you?" I asks him. "There's a by-law, if I remember right, about getting too hospitable-minded toward criminals."

He grinned. "Oh, that'll be all right," he says, "if yuh want to come you'll be dead welcome."

"I wish," I remarks here, "you'd kindly leave out the 'dead.' My nerves is all unstrung reading that notice."

He grinned again and said he'd watch his tongue, and we footed it down the track and through the tunnel to his camp. I didn't suspicion that he had any crooked deal in mind, but all the same I kept abreast and on the right side of him where my gun-hand would be free; and going through the tunnel I dropped a step to the rear. I wasn't taking no chances, yuh see.

At camp his brother rose up from fanning the camp-fire with his hat, and eyed me curious. Standing there with the sun at his back, he showed up strong and I sized up his points and liked him worse than I did the first one. Brother had two little yellow eyes that would have run together and made one only for his beak that kept 'em some separate, and his nose overhung the rest of him, and he had a lip on him that hung down like the lip of a bull moose. He wasn't none pretty, nor yet enticing in his ways.

"Who are you?" he says to me—which is about as unpolite a question as you can ask a man out in the range country.

But I didn't reproach him for it. "Calamity Jack is what you can call me," I answers him civil, and he turned and asked my guide several questions with them little yellow eyes."

"You can wash up, down at the river, and then we'll eat," says the first one, and I took the hint and ambled off so they could talk about me. You can gamble I didn't turn my back square on 'em, but angled off so I could keep cases with the tail of my eye. Nothing happened till that night at supper, except that I watched them furtive and they endeavored constant to allay my fears.

Then the smooth guy I'd met at the station opened up on a slick talk about the injustice of hunting a man down for nothing much, and how anybody with any nerve would hand it right out

to law and order at every turn. Also, he mentioned what a blessing is a little money to a man that's on the dodge, and remarked casual that he knew where a bunch of coin could be picked up easy and without much trouble. I commenced to see light, but I didn't say nothing at that time. I was willing to hear more. Immediate I was hearing it. It was all about how easy it would be to hold up a certain particular bank he mentioned, and how the three of us could work it like a charm. They'd looked the thing over, he said, but couldn't see their way clear to handling the job alone. And then I appears on the scene like an angel of deliverance, so to speak, and they stood ready and anxious to let me in on the snap.

Now, what do yuh think uh that?

I didn't study long over the proposition. I just got up, slung my coffeecup into the dishpan and stuck my thumbs in my belt casual. "Folks," I says, "I'm willing to admit that I'm a real snake and bad to meet in the trail nights when there ain't any moon. I'm free to confess that there's a bounty on my pelt, like I was a damn' coyote. Still, at the same time, I'm some considerable exclusive in my tastes, and when I set into a game I play my hand out alone. And," I says deliberate, "a thief I do despise. So-long, gents. Just keep your seats; no need at all of getting up to speed the parting guest. Just go right on with your supper and don't mind me."

They sure did, though. My idea, being something of a mind-reader about then and knowing fine they aimed to drop me and cash in my hide for five hundred, was to back into the tunnel mouth and make my getaway. I backed for a spell, all right, keeping my hand on my gun. But it's considerable rough going along there, and so when I'd got most to the shade of the hill, my heel hits a rock so forcible that I can't save myself from going down on my spine.

That was as good as they wanted, and they proceeded immediate to cut loose and smoke me up a-plenty. I'm happy to say their aim was poor; besides, I laid kinda in the shadow of a big rock,

so they couldn't get a line on me none too well. I shot back a few times and winged brother with the ingrowing nose, and then I started to crawl toward the tunnel cautious.

I hadn't got no distance at all when that same hole in the hill commenced to erupt humans like it was a hornets' nest that had been molested a lot. They come shooting, too, and yelling words that put the fear of the Lord into me—and into the other two gazabos a heap worse. They forgot sudden that they was after my scalp, and took to the woods—which there wasn't any, but just hill and rocks—shooting while they faded away. Some of the bunch—they was a sheriff's posse—got sight of me and cut loose, yelling frightful. I didn't do no more crawling. I got on my legs and made 'em show cause why they was built so long; and they sure did step high and wide down that slope to the river.

Seemed like about forty took after me hell-bent and hollering. I learned afterward that only six men come out that tunnel—but at the time you never could've made me believe there was less than fifty at a low estimate. I learned several things afterward; among 'em the fact that the station-agent got to thinking about me after I went down the track with this fellow, and it occurred to him that I looked a heap like that description, so he told a fellow, and he told another, and the sheriff got wind of it and got up a party to come out and investigate—which I will say they done, and done thorough.

Why, they was investigating for half a mile down that river, and me just keeping dodging along like a scared rabbit among the rocks and looking for an opening to do something besides run. I could 'a' shot back and scattered 'em, I reckon, but I heard 'em yell surrender, and that means the law was backing their play. I didn't have no desire to wing a sheriff and get hung; I aim to die some other way that's pleasanter and less public. I don't want the whole country reading how Jack Bellamy spent his last night and just what he had for breakfast, and how he

was calm and smoked a cigarette on his way to the scaffold. Not on your life!

Well, I loped through the gloom and them fogging along behind, and then I rounded a little bend and got out uh sight for a minute. And right there I found a boat pulled up on shore and left loose. The way I piled in and shoved her in amongst a bunch of willows wasn't slow. I knew better than to pull out onto the gray glisten of the river just then, where they could have smoked me up leisurely. It was dark, but yet not so blamed dark, either. I saw 'em come puffing up to where I'd disappeared, and look around cautious; but they didn't see me, and you can gamble I never exerted myself none to draw their attention. They scouted around till it got so dark they couldn't see and didn't like to take any long chances on getting pot-shot, and then they turned back. I counted just exactly three, which was a lot surprising and come near keeping me there till sunup waiting for the other thirty-six to get out of the way.

However I didn't, but took it for granted my imagination had exaggerated a lot, and so I slid down through the willows till I'd rounded another bend or two, and then got both oars in the row-locks and bent my back energetic getting away from that immediate vicinity. I couldn't see through events a little bit, but then I didn't waste no time trying. I savvyed fine that I'd come within one shake of getting into the clutches of the law, and that was about all the incentive I needed for pulling down-river till daylight.

Come sunrise, I spotted a sheep-camp in a little bottom, and pulled down close and tied the boat in the willows. You see, I needed grub and was going to need it a heap worse before I got out of that scrape. I saw the herder out a half-mile or so with his sheep, and went cautious to the cabin, which was empty and dirty as sin; no dishes washed, or nothing.

Maybe you think I swiped a lot of grub and pulled out immediate. I done nothing of the kind. I wasn't in no great hurry to go back to them oars,

and from the look of the country I knew I'd come a long ways and was tolerable safe. So I started a fire, got some water hot and washed the dishes, first pass. The coffee-pot was that vile I just simply had to take it to the river and scour it with sand before I could boil coffee in it and drink the same with any kind uh relish. Whilst the coffee was cooking I cleaned out the cabin so I could find a spot I wouldn't feel reluctant about setting down on; how that sheep-herder could stomach a kennel like that beat me, and I just thought I'd give him an object-lesson in house-keeping. Which I done.

Well, I got things cleaned so I could cook breakfast and sit down in comfort to eat it, and then I went through his grub-stake systematic and took some of everything—which I will say wasn't much. He was about down to cases, for a fact, and it looked to me like the camp-tender was about due with more chuck. And as camp-tenders are most generally walking newspapers, and would likely know all about Jack Belamy's return and subsequent escape, I didn't see no cause why I should linger around there unnecessary. So I done up what grub I'd annexed and got ready to drift. Oh, I paid for the stuff, if you're beginning to wonder any. Left some money and a little note on the table with the butcher-knife on top to keep it there. The note wasn't much. I just said: "Cleanness is next thing to godliness. You ain't liable to be particular godly, so for the Lord's sake try and keep clean." It was good advice, but I don't suppose the dirty siwash took it to heart none.

After that I got back into the boat and let her drift down close to shore, where I wouldn't show up to any one riding the high lines looking for yours truly. When I'd got to a nice, snuggy little bottom that it didn't look to me any one could get into from land unless maybe they was let down in a bucket, I pulled in and hunted the soft side of a sand bed to sleep till dark.

Long about sundown I built a camp-fire and cooked me some supper, and then took to the water again. I didn't

have any particular place I was heading for, except that in a casual way I wanted a lot to get somewhere where they didn't grow sheriffs on every sage-bush; I was getting plumb tired of that species of human.

All that night I perambulated farther into the wild. Next day I went ashore and slept. And when I cooked my supper that night I seen that I was about out of grub and it behooved me to rustle something. I could get deer, but deer without salt ain't what I'd call good eating but some flat-tasting; and with eight hundred dollars in my jeans I sure didn't feel none like going hungry.

Claggett was close—I didn't know but what it was *too* close—and I could easy buy what I wanted and then live in the hills till the excitement calmed down some—supposing there was any excitement, which I didn't know for sure but could guess at a-plenty. Of course it was taking some chances, going into a settlement bold, that way, but I thought maybe I could get in and out again before anybody got to thinking much to my detriment.

First off, I hunted me a secluded spot and cached my boat and most of the money in case of need. My clothes looked some rough by that time, and I remember my shirt wasn't as clean as when I left Butte, so I discards my necktie, wallops my new hat in the dirt some more to make it look old as sin, slouches it down over my ears sheep-herder style and goes back from the river as far as I felt like walking, to get a good start. Then I moseys up from the south, walking some sore-footed and ungraceful, and appears at the store looking the hobo sheep-herder I figured on being taken for. I didn't reckon they'd be looking for me, no-how, and felt tolerable secure.

Well, I enters the store and leans against a pickle-barrel casual and asks if there's any letter for me; and when the head push says "Who?" I drawls out "Calamity Jack" in a whining voice I'd be ashamed to own permanent, and then adds "Robinson" to make it look like the real thing.

He licks his thumb and shuffles a deck of letters two or three times over to make sure, and says no, there ain't anything for me. And I sighs more disappointed than what I felt and rolls me a cigarette whilst I thought out what would go farthest and be the least to carry in the line of grub. Of course, I've solved that same problem many a time on pack trips, but there was a little difference now—I had to do the packing this trip, instead of a horse.

The clerk come around to get me what I wanted, but first off he gives a kid a stick of candy and whispers something in his ear and sent him off to his maw. Then he done up some beans and bacon and salt and a little flour, and put 'em all in a sack so I could carry 'em, and I smoked another cigarette and then paid him for the stuff.

I'd just picked up the bag and started for the door, when two big, overgrown gazabos stepped inside, and one had a Winchester in both fists and pointing toward me, and the other one a twelve-gage double-barreled shotgun; I reckon they was both loaded to the guards, too. I looked around reproachful at the fellow I'd bought the stuff from, and darned if he wasn't pulling down on me with a six-shooter. Now wouldn't that jostle you some?

It was a lot evident they looked upon me as a Bad Man—the kind yuh read about, that used to inhabit the West and give peaceable citizens nervous prostration just to hear mentioned. At any rate, the three of them marched me ahead of 'em to the bunk-house, and two of them held their guns on me whilst the other one hobbled my legs together with a trace-chain and padlock. Now, what do yuh think of that?

That was just before supper. The clerk had to go back and tend to the store in case somebody might happen along and want to buy something, and one man they called Paddy had some business that was urgent, so the third one, name of Mike, stayed with me and kept me company—him and the twelve-gage, double-barreled shotgun. They discussed free the reason why he had better keep the shotgun instead of the

rifle, and I will say it wasn't none encouraging; seems the shotgun was loaded with BB shot, and he couldn't miss me with a dozen or so, if he tried, no matter how nervous he got. It was a strong argument, and I could see the point, all right.

Mike was sure a loquacious cuss, and went right to talking—to keep up his courage, I reckon, same as a kid whistles in the dark—so all I had to do was set still and listen polite, and by supper-time I was right up to date on current and past events and was learning some considerable about the future—my future, that is.

It was there I learned how come it them men boiled out of the tunnel and like to got me. It was me they was after, mainly. Still at the same time, they knew my hosts well and not favorable, and pulled 'em both on suspicion of busting into a hardware store in Benton and getting off with some dandy guns and enough shells to start a war with. Brother with the ingrowing nose was in the hospital, and the sheriff took credit to himself for smashing his arm, which he didn't; I done that myself before they appeared on the scene.

From the pearls uh wisdom that dropped constant from Mike's lips I likewise learned that the sheriff suspicioned I'd taken to water, and mind-read the case sufficient to infer that sooner or later I'd land at Claggett for supplies. He'd hiked right down on a fast horse—him and two or three more—and put them wise, and told 'em, if I showed up, to gather me to their bosoms and hold me close till he come back, and he'd give 'em the whole five hundred; the glory of taking me into camp was as good as he wanted, he said. You see, I'd growed quite a rep whilst I was gone out of the country. He'd gone on down-river to warn what ranchers was settled along in the bottoms, and they was going to collect that bounty or know the reason why. And when I looked down at the trace-chain hobble I was wearing, it seemed to me like a cinch they would, all right.

Before supper was called I heard

from Mike that brother with the bull-moose lip had took it upon himself to play even with me, and had loaded the sheriff up on a yarn about me approaching him and his brother with a bold scheme to rob a bank and hold up a train, and how they being too virtuous to listen, had incurred my anger and a bullet or two. Supper was called about that time so I didn't hear no more, Mike being anxious to get a hand in the game and waiting uneasy to be relieved.

Paddy, he come and kept me company with the shotgun whilst Mike fed, and Paddy didn't have anything much to say, being occupied mostly in looking fierce and murderous and giving me the bad eye. I was plenty glad of the silence, for I was busy just then doing some tall thinking. I knew they would probably have to keep me there for a couple of days waiting for the sheriff, and I was a heap eager to be numbered amongst the absent when that same party arrived. But how to pull off the deal was what got me, and I needed a lot of time to think it over.

After supper, whilst they was all three setting over me watching me eat, I noticed one little thing that kinda give me an idea; Mike had to get into his trunk, that was standing against the wall right close to me, and when he lifts up the lid I happen to glance that way casual and see a bunch of keys laying there in the tray. There looked to be quite a nice assortment, and I just happened to wonder if one wouldn't fit the padlock on my leg. Still, at the same time, I didn't do no wondering out loud.

Well, all the first part of that evening, when the three set there together watching me and smoking and chin-whacking, I turns sulky and wouldn't reply none to their remarks, and looked mean and unamiable. It didn't have no visible effect on 'em, though; they didn't get insulted and go off and leave me alone, like I hoped maybe they might. Not on your life!

So then, along about eight, I goes to sleep peaceful and snoring to beat four queens. That don't work, either; they set there smoking and talking and

figuring what they'll do with the money when they cash me in. Now, I hate to be looked upon like as if I was a stack uh red chips that all you've got to do is shove me across to the dealer any time and get your money. And when Mike got to looking through a catalogue at high-priced and fancy saddles, and thumbing over where the silver-mounted spurs and headstalls was showed, and discoursing on full-stamped rigs and whether he'd have his initials stamped on the inside or outside of the cante, I will own I got plumb sore at the whole bunch.

Long about nine they commenced to yawn, and I seen they was the early-to-bed kind—there being nothing doing usual to keep 'em up after sundown. Anyway, I gathered from their talk that they'd all three been watching the river the night before, they was so scared I'd pass by in the night. Paddy and the clerk—they called him Jim—said for Mike to set up and watch me till eleven, and then call one of them. See? they meant to stand guard all night.

I didn't none approve of them arrangements, so I woke up savage and cussing fierce. Paddy and Jim didn't go to bed for a while. They wasn't much accustomed to handling bad men, and for an hour or so they didn't do nothing. Then Paddy got brave and offered to gag me so they could sleep, and I bit his hand some. I hated to, but it was necessary. He didn't come close no more, but set back and tried to think of more mean names than I could.

Well, language passed around free and unpretty till midnight, but nobody went to sleep. Paddy was sure snaky by that time, and wanted to kill me off, on the grounds that I was worth just as much dead. But I wasn't none fearful, and anyway, the rest wouldn't stand for nothing like that.

Long about one o'clock I run out of language and hated to repeat, so I took to singing come-all-ye songs and rattling my chains for music. It sounded sad and mournful, all right, and the wind come up and got to howling plenty and shaking the windows, so it made a real effectual disturbance. They didn't

sleep none, but they wanted to bad, as I could see by the way their eyes got heavy. I was sure thankful they'd watched the river so faithful the night before. I know quite a number of songs, some of 'em bloody-minded, and some about love and broken hearts, and I sung every one I could think of, and never reniged on the choruses, either. It took me till three o'clock to go through my repytory. They all three stayed awake and made threats, but didn't attack me none with anything but cuss-words.

It would get light at five or thereabouts, and I was hoarse as a calf the third day of weaning. Also, I was some weary. Still at the same time I wasn't ready to quit yet, and managed, by thrashing around a lot and helping out with my voice occasional, to make rough-house for most another hour. Then about four I kinda drooped, gradual, and curled down and went to sleep, apparent.

Pretty soon they done the same, being dog-tired and plumb wore out trying to earn that bounty. Soon as I made sure they was dead to the world, I just lifts up the lid of that trunk cautious, glommed the bunch of keys and made a ten-strike second try. The key fit the padlock, and it didn't take me all morning to get that trace-chain off and lay it gently down on the floor. Then I walks calmly out, only I didn't make all the noise I knew how, as you can maybe surmise.

It was dark yet when I got out in the air, but that wouldn't last long. First off, I heads for the store, seeks a window facing to the hills and pries her open with a stick I found. Then I crawls in, locates my bag of stuff just where I'd dropped it when they nabbed me, and made a few more purchases, waiting on myself obliging. It was kinda taking chances in there, lighting matches to see my way around, but I just about had to do it.

As I was making my way prudent to the window with my load, I like to have fell over a pail of black paint with a brush in it. That put another fool notion into my head, and I annexes the

paint and goes back to the bunk-house, which I had to pass by anyhow, so it wasn't none out of my way.

It was just getting gray like, so I could see fairly good, and the bunk-house didn't contain no sound but snores. So I stops at the door, set down my grub-stake and paints a little motto bold and big, clear across the boards before I drifts into the hills. I'd like to have seen them gazabos when they read it, and Mike when he woke up and knew for sure he'd have to post-

pone buying that full-stamped saddle with his initials on the cantle.

When I'd got a hundred yards off, I turned around and looked back—same as Mrs. Lot, only I didn't turn into nothing—and I could read the words fine. They was sure big, and like to have covered the door complete. They was: "*Gone but not forgot*," and they was true as anything. By sunup I was sure gone, all right—far as them three was concerned. I never did see 'em again.



THE WONDERS OF WATER

THE extent to which water mingles with bodies apparently solid is wonderful. The glittering opal, which beauty wears as an ornament, is only flint and water. In every plaster of Paris statue which an Italian carries through our streets for sale there is 1 pound of water to every 4 pounds of chalk. The air we breathe contains five grains of water to each cubic foot of its bulk. The potatoes and turnips which are boiled for our dinner have, in their raw state, the one 75 per cent. and the other 90 per cent. of water.

If a man weighing 140 pounds were squeezed flat in a hydraulic press, 105 pounds of water would run out and only 35 pounds of dry residue remain. A man is, chemically speaking, 35 pounds of carbon and nitrogen, diffused through five and a half pailfuls of water. In plants we find water thus mingling in no less wonderful a manner.

A sunflower evaporates one and a quarter pints of water a day, and a cabbage about the same quantity. A wheat plant exhales in 172 days about 100,000 grains of water. An acre of growing wheat, on this calculation, draws and passes out about ten tons of water per day.

The sap of plants is the medium through which this mass of fluid is conveyed. It forms a delicate pump, by which the watery particles run with the rapidity of a swift stream. By the action of the sap, various properties may be communicated to the growing plant. Timber in France is, for instance, dyed by various colors being mixed with water and poured over the root of the tree. Dahlias are also colored by a similar process.



WHERE BATHS ARE TAKEN ONCE A MONTH

APPARENTLY the people of Persia are not great believers in the old maxim, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," for baths are taken only once a month by the people, when they go to the public baths and make amends, so to speak, for the infrequency of their ablutions by spending a whole day getting cleaned and trimmed. At the baths they are washed, shaved, dye their hair and nails, get shampooed, and spend the rest of the day eating buns and drinking sherbet.

There are fixed days for men and women, and on bath days a man goes about the streets shouting "Hamum!"—"Bath Day." After the bath the ladies have their hair plaited in a number of thin plaits, which are not opened and combed out until the next bath day comes round.

Deep Down

By Charles Francis Bourke

A gripping tale of deep-sea diving. On the floor of the Atlantic, fifty feet below the surface, a thrilling scene is enacted, a gamble of death with a man-eating shark as the dealer



THE *Rasseldar* salvage job went to Thomas Blount, because a deep-sea diver was required and Blount had been groping in deep water on the ocean-bed off the government proving-grounds for a patent torpedo which had made a premature dive, in the midst of some very interesting ordnance experiments.

Groping for balky torpedoes is monotonous work at best, and there was a certain heart interest about *Rasseldar* story, as Bronson the secretary of the Divers' Association told it, that appealed to the stocky, square-faced deep-sea expert, ordinarily impassive to the elemental romance of his profession.

"The *Rasseldar* underwriters have had Fisher fooling on the job for two weeks," the secretary explained. "I take it they're not satisfied with the progress he hasn't made."

"That'll be Jimmy Fisher that was fired from the D. A. last year, and went on the outlaw?" Blount remarked tentatively. As an experienced diver who guards against possible eventualities, he knew very well the place and nature of Fisher's employment.

"Yes, and just now you're the only other available timber that can handle this *Rasseldar* job. The packet blundered off Point Rock, inside of the Cape, and ducked into fifty feet with only a boat's crew accounted for. Carried passengers and five hundred thousand dollars lading, and they do say she had undeclared specie for Boston."

"Underwriters figured to pump her out and raise her, o' course?"

"Yes, but they haven't done it, or rather Fisher hasn't. They didn't tell me that Fisher is reniging. But those drowned people are still down 'tween-decks."

Diver Blount finished a thoughtful survey of his boots.

"I'll go," he said laconically.

"Seventy-five a day, I stuck them," Bronson added. "Seeing they didn't come to us first off, instead of hiring Fisher."

Blount did not heed. While the secretary spoke, a big-muscled, bull-necked, sullen fellow was in his mind's eye, and coupled with a mysterious treasure and a packet-load of passengers washing round on the sea-bottom, his thoughts remained with the man during his night ride to Boston. For Blount had worked with James Fisher in times past.

Diver Thomas Blount was to absorb the details of Fisher's work when the wrecking tug took him off to Point Rock, half a dozen miles from the coast. The underwriters' inspector was on the wrecking lighter, awaiting him.

"She's down here under the lighter yet," the inspector said. "I'm not going to make any secret of the fact that the company's nervous about the work of your confrère, Mr. Jim Diver Fisher. That fakir hasn't made good." The inspector's temper was obviously frayed.

"Well, you can't most always tell," Blount said. "Drowned ships are curious cattle. They've put good men in the madhouse before this."

The inspector glanced inquiringly at the diver, with the tail of his eye on a motor-boat that was approaching from the harbor.

"Look here, Mister Man," he broke out with sudden vehemence, "I'm going to give it to you straight. Now, I ask you as a man that knows this sinky diving business: What's a diver, name of Fisher, wallowing at, six hours a day, till he's swelled up like a bloater and speechless as a clam? And look at them hydraulic pumps rusting there at twenty dollars a day, and four men yanking air and two more running at hoisting-drum, all on his behalf. He says he's battening hatches and stoppering blow-holes. If there was any way he could cache it, I'd lay he was lightering out the whole cargo on the floor of the Atlantic!"

Blount sympathized with the inspector. As he told himself, there's nothing calculated to make a man more frantic than to believe some one is doing him right under his nose. He remembered, too, the undeclared specie the *Rasseldar* was said to carry. If there *was* any specie, it would be all velvet to the underwriters—if the divers played fair.

When Diver Fisher came aboard Blount could see he was anything but agreeably surprised to find a professional brother awaiting him, but he strode across the lighter and put out a brawny fist.

"Heard you was coming, Tom. Some time since we worked team. I ain't sorry to have help, too. The strain's telling on me like the very devil." He stood pulling his black mustache and taking measure, with narrowing eyes that had an unspoken question in them.

"'Tain't alone the pressure, but there's tide and ground-swells that pitch the damned ark like a wooden horse. It's a job where two ain't a big crowd." To Blount's amazement the diver's voice broke into a shrill cry, his face distorted and twitching.

"Man, diving's hell! Deep down there, Tom! All alone!"

"And that's nerves," Blount said calmly. "Pull up, Jim!"

An instinctive feeling that there was something dangerous ahead crept over the ordinarily phlegmatic Blount. He tried to shake it off, but his mind harked back to other occasions in his career when the "diver's warning" had heralded coming danger; the saw-fish that ripped the back of his diving-suit on the Florida Keys; and again when he sprang from the hatch-cover that let poor old Bill Donovan into the hold of the *Lottie Abbott*, off Barnegat, a fall that whipped Donovan's air-hose out of the top pump.

He emerged from ominous speculation, in presence of action. Fisher had quickly recovered himself and criticized jovially the Association man's armor, a special deep-water suit with copper bands on back and breast, for additional protection against heavy water-pressure.

"You don't need to bother about wire ends and spikes with that iron-clad bathing-suit of yours," Fisher grinned. He kneeled while the helper adjusted his helmet and, with a nod, swung his weighted shoes upon the ladder. The pumps clanked and an endless succession of air-bubbles, rising to the surface, marked the depth of the descent.

As the inspector took up Blount's helmet he regarded the diver curiously. "I'm not crying wolf, as a usual thing," he remarked, "but speaking generally I take it a man only makes one miscue in your business."

"You watch my signal-cord," Blount answered. "Until I come up don't let anybody get next to my air-hose except yourself. *Anybody*, mind."

The inspector nodded his understanding. "A revolver wouldn't do you any good, would it?" he suggested, feeling in his pocket. They both laughed. "Good Lord, this weird job is giving me old women highstrikes. Well, anyhow, you can count cases on me."

He adjusted the diver's chest-weights and locked his helmet and Blount climbed down into the sea.

Fisher was awaiting him at the foot of the ladder. Both divers

switched on their electric-belt lights and Fisher clasped his companion by the shoulder, swinging him round, pointing to the swamped ship.

Through his helmet vizor Blount saw the other's eyes glowing as strength came back to him with the force of the air-pressure, that transient stimulant that braces a deep-sea diver like champagne. He saw something else at the same instant.

The ghastly, dim shape of the packet lay broadside to them, listing on the bottom silt as an excursion-boat might list with the passengers crowding to one side, and gently swaying to the action of the strong tide and the send of the sea.

Blount knew where the packet's passengers were imprisoned; moving about the superstructure, passing to and fro over and under her bridge and between the two raking black and white funnels, ominous gray shadows surged through the water, wheeling and rounding as they traversed the length of her cabin promenade, as if the big fish were playing a sort of solemn "follow the leader." One shadow nosed at a clumsily patched hole in the starboard bow of the packet, as though inspecting the workmanship.

Behind his vizor Fisher's lips shaped the word "sharks." Blount nodded. "Them man-eating gentry must be pretty familiar," he said grimly to himself, "seeing you didn't mention 'em up top."

A rope ladder was attached to the listed side of the ship, but so deep down were they that in the sea-pressure a sharp thrust of the foot on the bottom sent them to the projecting strake of the cabin deck, where they vaulted over the rail, directly before the saloon companionway.

Bracing against the long sea-swell, and clearing their air-hose from the overhanging superstructure, the two divers turned the light of their electric-lamps into the saloon cabin. Blount threw a glance at a black something that surged against the paneled ceiling of the saloon and he drew a deep breath. Then his fascinated gaze

dropped to the only figure remaining on the cabin floor, among the debris-strewn tables and the empty chairs.

A steward, a mere lad, swayed with the rhythmical roll of the packet, behind the captain's seat, at the head of the table. In one hand the boy still grasped a napkin. The other hand was locked on the back of the captain's chair. But for that unyielding grip, the action of the sea-water and the roll of the ship would have floated him up among the others in that grim cabin long before.

In a sudden fit of rage Blount swung on his companion diver and pointed into the saloon. Why had he not fulfilled the first sacred duty of a diver, never neglected, though the treasures of the world might otherwise await his hand?

Fisher shook his head sullenly and pointed downward to the hold. There his work lay; besides—and this Blount knew—it was no easy task for one man to secure those dead. They could wait. With smoldering rage in his heart, he followed Fisher to the wrecked hatches where as sullenly he pointed out the work he had done with tarpaulins, jack-screws and clamping-irons. From the splintered condition of the deck it was plain that when the ship struck and began to sink the air confined in the hold had blown the deck hatches outward and opened additional apertures to let down the intruding water. Judging from the appearance of the work done, Fisher had evidently not hurried himself. Then what else had he been engaged at? What secret labor that had left its mark so plainly upon his giant frame?

As he puzzled over the problem, Fisher turned his lamp to illuminate something he had written on his soap-stone tablet.

"One hour's the limit," he had scrawled almost illegibly. "Come up—talk it over."

Blount followed him over the ship's side. At the foot of the rope ladder Fisher checked himself. Then he swung round, his black eyes strangely glaring through the lens of his vizor.

Again he held the slate up before him and wrote. Blount's instinctive distrust was now roused to conviction. An hour the limit? He knew well that a deep-sea diver could stay down in fifty feet of water for two hours or more—even with a storm-swell rising. Besides, Fisher's actions did not ring right. It was plain to Blount's practised eye that the man's brain was going the way of his body. His whole figure expressed a defiant threat as he held up the slate in his big hairy hand, bared and swollen below the constricting rubber cuff of his diving-suit. Blount read, and was not even surprised at the dénouement.

"The packet had big specie aboard, not declared. They wanted to pinch insurance. It belongs to *nobody* now."

They were standing under the leeward side of the packet, measuring each other through their vizors. Fisher leaned upon a long-hafted poleax, one he had used in shoring away the wreckage on the ship's deck and which he had caught up as they swung over the side.

Now Blount knew the black-browed colossus for what he was—a ghoul—a sea-robber. As he always had been, when he knew him before—anything for gold!

Blount was clear-headed and strong, and his calling had taught him to think quickly. Though he despised more than feared the outlaw diver, Fisher was a rascal with whom it was well to temporize—till they reached the surface.

He shook his head dubiously and pointed upward. In return he received a look so black, so menacing, that the "diver's feeling of danger" chilled him to the marrow. And while they stood thus, the gray shadows of those sea buzzards—the sharks—swayed grimly over them, winding in and out, round and round the funnels of the packet; searching for what was below, or scenting living prey more conveniently at hand.

Then, seemingly, Fisher thought better of it. He moved away from the ship's side. One of the prowling sea

forms swung out after him. Blount watched it go and he watched it as it whirled round and came darting back, twisting slightly on the side, its little, cruel, lidless eye glaring like a dull diamond. Over his head two other gray forms stopped, remaining stationary between the ship's stacks. The packet rolled and slowly, solemnly, a form ascended through the companionway. He watched it rise above the ship, a grotesque, eye-compelling figure, holding a white cloth in one hand, which a cross-current moved backward and forward. It was as though the dead were signaling for help. In a flash the sharks were upon the floating form.

Off guard for the moment, Blount had turned his back to Fisher. Instantly a paralyzing shock shot through his whole body; the deep-sea ocean lights flickered in fiery flashes. He felt himself falling and still falling—the thought came to him that his air-tube had parted—the pain scalding his spine sent him floating away on eons of time in the depths of the ocean.

There is a story of a Roman emperor. One who lying on his couch, in a last mechanical movement before sleep overtook him, upset a carafe of water. Before the sleeper woke a whole life's history had passed before him. From emperor he had been prisoner—slave—living a lifetime of servitude and torture in a strange country. Then the Roman awoke. The carafe was still lying on the table beside him—the water was still oozing from the narrow neck of the bottle. He had slept less than five seconds.

When Blount opened his eyes, after generations spent with the ocean dead, Fisher was picking up his poleax. Blount saw him, as in a trance.

After peace, came agony and speculation. He remembered—as one hears a tale, that there is but one way by which a diver, under water, can be killed and the murderer safely escape. Divers bent on murder do not cut air-tubes or slash diving-suits, in the fashion of the melodrama. There is only one safe method—a spearlike blow with the point of a handspike or the butt of a

polcax in the back. A blow that paralyzes the spinal-cord and leaves no tell-tale mark behind. A blow that kills instantly, nine times out of ten.

That cowardly blow Fisher had dealt him, on his brass-bound suit!

The air was coming down, clear and sweet, filling his helmet and surging into his lungs. The gray forms of the sharks still patiently floated over him, and, as his tortured vision cleared, an apparition, more definite, disclosed itself.

He *had* seen Fisher pick up the ax, but now the outlaw diver was working on the sea-bottom, some distance from the ship; working in haste, engrossed in frantic labor in some mysterious occupation. Blount saw him hauling down and chopping off round, flat objects, separating them from lines that had attached them to the sea-bottom. Then he understood what the man was doing—the plot of the outlaw became plain as day to the diver, who knew every trick and turn of the trade.

Fisher was disconnecting floats and halliard-lines that he had previously attached to boxes of specie hidden in the ocean's bed.

The diver's scheme was simplicity itself—so long as he had but himself to reckon with. At the top of the thin, white lines, the wooden floats swung some twenty feet below the surface of the sea, where they could easily be grappled for and fished up at some time in the convenient future. He was a freebooter who had marked down his loot where none but himself could find it. This was the work that Fisher had engaged himself with. The hint of the Association secretary; the undeclared specie aboard the sunken *Rasseldar*; the thing needed no explanatory diagram!

As Blount struggled to his feet he saw the wild eyes in the vizzor of the helmet turned and Fisher swung his belt-light upon him.

Dropping his ax and whipping his knife from his belt Fisher sprang at him. Blount had only time to brace himself, but his hand gripped the assassin's wrist as the heavy blade de-

scended, and glanced from the copper sheathing of his deep-sea armor. Then he realized that the madman in his frenzy of disappointment was bent on killing, knowing that he was lost in any event if Blount got to the surface alive. And then began a duel to the death, deep down on the floor of the Atlantic.

Big as Fisher was, his muscles were no more than a match for Blount's, hardened by weeks of well-ordered deep-sea work at the proving-grounds, and he saw besides that the man's arduous labor down under fifty feet of seawater had weakened his lungs. Even the treacherous blow Blount had received had done no more than place the two divers on an equal footing. But Fisher was desperate. He was fighting, as he thought, for a fortune, and Blount knew that Jim Fisher was not one to let a man's life deter him when gold was on the balance. That there was much gold, the many floats and halliard-lines spoke eloquently.

From the lighter above he could feel the anxious inspector twitching at the signal-cord. Fisher saw it too, and his powerful hand sought to tear the air-hose from the reservoir on Blount's shoulders. As the Association diver fell away, his glance went upward to where the white air-bubbles were rippling from the helmets. A shark was sporting playfully in the bubbles, darting round the mingled lines of air-hose and signal-cords and swirling the air-bubbles aside like a string of silver pearls, with the sweep of his forked tail. The monster had come from the drowned ship to investigate this conflict that promised food from living creatures.

As the conflict was renewed the great fish balanced menacingly in the water over the struggling men, its white double row of teeth silently champing, its little, wicked, bleary eyes gloating down like frosted lamps, its prehensile tail waving like a water-tendrill to and fro.

For the space of a breath Blount felt his foe's arm relax. With a sudden output of his strength he twisted the knife from Fisher's grip. At the

same instant Fisher clasped him in both of his powerful arms, striving to crush in his ribs, forgetful of the copper bands that protected the diver's body. Then came a horrible diversion to the two men locked in a death-grip. A shudder ran through Fisher's body. With his helmet crushing against Blount's chest, he gave a sudden twist of his head upward at the scourge of the sea above, watching silently, patiently, a human look of understanding in its immovable eyes.

The man-eater turned on his side, diverting himself by playfully nipping at the air-bubbles that rippled from the divers' helmets. Then a vicious, impatient sweep of the shark's tail clouded the sea-water. He was so close down that Blount heard the clamp of his jaws upon the air-hose and lines.

For the space of a heart-beat the diver's blood froze. Which air-tube had he grasped? The signal-cords and hose were twined together, tangled like a frayed cable. It was a gamble of death—a gamble with a man-eating shark for dealer! Fate had never two mortal foes together in such a position. It was so strange, so unparalleled, that Blount's brain made no attempt to grasp the horror of the situation. Almost calmly he waited for a death-dealing deluge of water to rush from the severed pipe into his lungs. The shark released his grip.

Fisher's hold loosened. He fell away. Through his vizor Blount saw his eyes inverted in pain and almost ludicrous surprise. His diving-sheath collapsed

gradually, like a child's punctured balloon. He seemed to shrink to the size of a skeleton, his solid helmet growing disproportionately enormous. Then he fell slowly backward, his shriveled arms stretched thinly out into the swirling green water. He was a diver, and he knew that death came more quickly and mercifully to one who did not struggle against suffocation. Only by the twitching of his limbs did Blount know that life was ebbing from him as he lay upon the floor of the ocean—dying in blank, hopeless silence, a scant dozen yards from where he had stored his looted treasure.

The frantic jerking of his signal-cord, showing that the men on top were aware that some submarine catastrophe had taken place, brought Blount to his senses. Staggering, stumbling like an old man, he passed Fisher and the treasure he had planted and reached the sea-ladder. A shove of his weighted foot shot him twenty feet up. As he gripped the rungs of the ladder he glanced over his shoulder, downward.

The gray shadow that he knew to be the shark balanced above Fisher's form, as though the man-eater was warming his clammy body in the shaft of light cast upward by the dead diver's belt-lamp. Severed hose and life-line lay coiled like a nesting serpent upon the diver's breast.

With knowledge of an imperative, dread duty still lying before him, Blount climbed up the sea-ladder, shuddering.



APPLY DEFINED

A GOOD definition of a "Pharisee" is "a tradesman who uses long prayers and short weights"; of a humbug, "one who agrees with everybody"; and of a tyrant, "the other version of somebody's hero."

Thin soup, according to an Irish mendicant, is "a quart of water boiled down to a pint, to make it strong."

Of definitions of a bachelor, "unaltared man," "a singular being," and "a target for a miss" are apt enough.

"What sustained our sires during their struggle for liberty?" was what a teacher asked a boy, and was astonished when the boy said: "Their legs, sir."

Queen Draga's Cape

By J. Kenilworth Egerton

Author of "*The Man With the Paw*," "*The Perfume of Madness*," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

After a remarkable series of adventures that solved the mystery of the famous Man With the Paw, Le Garde, chief of the French secret service, sails for France from Tunis, while Tommy Williams and his friend who tells the story decide they need a rest, now that they have seen their arch enemy, Van Osten, sink beneath the waves of the Mediterranean. They plan to take the boat to Malta and travel leisurely northward. They spend their last night in Tunis among the bazaars of the native quarter. A heavily embroidered cape has attracted Tommy's fancy, and he bargains with Ben Said, a merchant, for its possession. The price asked is too high and they leave without purchasing. On their way back to their hotel they barely escape a mysterious attempt at assassination. In the hotel they make the acquaintance of a distinguished-looking couple who introduce themselves as Mr. Victor Gerard and the Countess of Cransac, his sister. That night Tommy does not sleep in his bed, but rolls himself up on a couch, and in the morning he finds a dagger deeply thrust through the bed. For various reasons he suspects Gerard and the countess, who are fellow passengers next day on the boat to Malta. The former is drinking very heavily. Before they sail the embroidered cape is delivered to Tommy by an Arab messenger from Ben Said. He is at a loss to account for this proceeding, as he had not bought the cape. Gerard and the countess are visibly startled when they see it. The countess offers to buy it. Tommy refuses, to her great disappointment and resentment. Afterward his cabin is entered, his luggage ransacked and the cape stolen. Following the theft a woman stealthily tries to enter Tommy's cabin in the dark, but finding him alert she runs away. He grabs her shawl. It is one belonging to the countess. She indignantly denies she was the woman, and is genuinely alarmed when she hears the cape has been stolen. Victor Gerard and the countess' maid mysteriously disappear from the ship as it is about to enter the harbor of Valetta.

(In Two Parts—Part II.)

VI,



RENEWED search of the ship and an exhaustive interrogation of the passengers and crew proved barren of result; for not a trace of the missing people was discovered and no one would acknowledge having seen either one of them under circumstances which would suggest suicide or violence. At the time Victor Gerard had disappeared—which could be fixed within a half-hour—the ship was running through the fleet of fishing-smacks from Valetta; but no one would acknowledge having seen the maid since she had left the countess' cabin the night before to go to her own.

Tommy and I were interested spectators as each of the passengers and crew was examined in turn; the former, as fast as they satisfied the officers that they could give no information of value, being at liberty to land. We had said nothing of our own experiences of the night; confining our replies to categorical answers of the questions put to us, and the countess was equally non-committal; although she was questioned more at length in the endeavor to discover possible motives for the disappearances. She was treated with every consideration and mark of respect, however, and when she announced that she would remain in Malta until the mystery was solved or given up as unsolvable she was permitted to go on shore.

"I think that Le Garde would have

made rather more of that examination," said Tommy dryly when the English officers had left the ship without obtaining the slightest helpful information. "So far as I heard, they only elicited one significant point: Celeste Angier has been in the service of the Countess of Cransac less than a month, and she was engaged in Algiers—and they attached no importance to that."

"Do you?" I asked, puzzled to discover what bearing it could have upon the mystery. He nodded and glanced toward the shore where the landing-boats containing the passengers were drawing near the stage.

"Decidedly," he answered absently. "Algiers is hardly the place where so experienced a woman of the world as the countess would look for a competent lady's maid, and I have grave doubts as to her ability to fill the bill."

"The countess' appearance was sufficient proof of that," I answered laughing; for his reasoning certainly seemed without foundation; and he grinned in return and pointed to the landing-stage. The last boat, in which the countess had embarked, was just alongside and a passenger from one of the previous ones was assisting her to get out of it.

"She seems more fitted to be a squire of dames," he said. "That is the passenger whose name appeared upon the list as Angelo Cappuro."

"What the deuce are you talking about?" I asked in bewilderment; for his speech seemed incoherent.

"Perhaps I have lost the art of expressing myself in English, but I mean exactly what I say," he replied, and there was a triumphant glitter in his eyes. "That is the name on the passenger-list and the one he gave to both the police and quarantine officials. He might have given another, only it would have required a little explanation; but he was also entitled to a passage under the name of Celeste Angier!"

"Do you mean to say that her maid was really a man disguised in woman's clothes?" I asked incredulously, and he laughed at my expression of bewilderment.

"No, my dear fellow, I'm not prepared to swear to that; it may be the other way about; but either that is the fact or Angelo Cappuro is a woman disguised in the clothes of a man; for they are one and the same person."

"You are sure of that, Tommy? It doesn't seem possible that the countess, who must have known the face of her maid so well, could have been deceived."

"She wasn't; not for a moment," he replied grimly. "That's why I do not believe it will be worth our while to waste very much time in listening to the charming imaginative tales which she would undoubtedly relate to account for her interest in that embroidered cape. I'm going to find out about that for myself."

"But, Tommy, if you are correct there was no disappearance and I don't see how that substitution could have been managed," I objected.

"On the contrary, there was a very effective disappearance; only no one discovered the reappearance," he answered. "You may remember that Cappuro, explained to the police that he occupied the cabin next to the missing maid. He also informed them that he heard no disturbance and that he was in his cabin from the time we left Tunis; too seasick to leave it. In a one-night trip of this kind the stewards hardly get to know their passengers and I'll wager that none of them saw his face until it appeared on deck this morning. It wasn't the face of a man who had been seasick all night and he's altogether too familiar with boats to be upset by such a passage as we had. Add to that that I identified it positively as the face which appeared under the sandy-haired wig worn by Celeste Angier when she came aboard as the countess' maid and it is easy enough to figure out the manner of the disappearance. Perhaps Celeste thought that we should make trouble for her—and perhaps we shall before we have finished with her, or her reincarnation, Angelo Cappuro."

"But what has become of the real passenger of that name?" I asked.

"In all probability he is as mythical as 'Mrs. Harris'; if not, I expect he is feeding the fishes at the bottom of the Mediterranean," he answered. "Personally I don't believe that such a person exists; I think passage was taken for him with the idea that it might come in handy."

"And Victor Gerard?" I said soberly. "You have not discovered a double for him?"

"Victor Gerard went overboard; for some good reason of his own or to escape from the avenging spirits he had conjured up by too free indulgence in alcohol," he answered. "Some one is going to explain it all before I have finished; for that drunkenness is a new development with him. When we know what drove him to drink, we shall know a whole lot more about the whole affair."

"You will report what you have discovered to the police?" I said, and he shook his head vigorously.

"My dear boy, it would take some one with powers of imagination to grasp it," he said, grinning. "I might tell it to Le Garde, if he were here; but I should never waste my time in trying to arouse the interest of an Englishman. Yes, I am Mr. Williams." His last remark was addressed to a messenger from the shore who had a couple of telegrams in his hand.

"I waited for you on the landing-stage, sir; but a lady told me that you were still on board," he said as Tommy signed the receipt for them. "She offered to deliver them to you; but I thought they might be important, sir." Tommy paid the tip which such devotion to duty seemed to call for and tore open the first envelope. He studied it carefully for a moment and then handed it to me. It was from Le Garde and read:

Victor Gerard is a member of English diplomatic corps, last attached to the legation at Belgrade. Member of well-known English family; but has no sister. Countess of Cransac unknown. Count of Cransac disappeared mysteriously from Warsaw two years since and has never been traced. Was formerly secretary of Austrian legation at Belgrade. Woman answering that description was much

seen in Paris last winter; but passed under name of Baroness Volnski. Have instituted further inquiries and will keep advised. Send address.

When I had finished reading it I looked at Tommy, who stood with the other telegram in his hand and a frown on his face.

"Read this one," he said curtly, and we exchanged messages. The second was dated Tunis but bore no signature.

Ben Said, the well-known Tunisian merchant, was brutally murdered in his shop in the bazaar last night. The supposed motive was to obtain possession of an embroidered cape for which you bargained unsuccessfully.

"Well, what do you think of this Chinese puzzle now?" demanded Tommy irritably when I had finished, and I was forced to admit that neither telegram had served to elucidate it.

"It's done one thing, though," he continued. "My confidence in my powers of observation is in a measure restored. I was cock-sure that those people were not brother and sister when I first saw them and equally certain that the woman was not English. Now I shall trust to it again and see what I can accomplish."

"What's the program, Tommy?" I asked helplessly.

"First, to get on shore; second, to get hold of the man Angelo Cappuro, or the woman Celeste Angier," he said as he motioned to one of the shore-boats to come alongside. "Just on the off chance I shall send to Le Garde to look up another record and then I think it might be well to interview the countess. I believe that I already know enough to disturb her equanimity."

I knew from the set expression of his face that there would be no rest for either of us until he had reached a solution and I groaned inwardly as I clambered down the side stairs into the waiting boat where our luggage had already been carried. It was manned by two rowers of the ordinary Maltese type, which is mongrel and composed of a mixture of all the races of the countries bordering the great inland sea.

They were not men whom I should have picked out for companions; but when I said so to Tommy he laughed and answered that they would probably serve our immediate purpose.

"All we want is to get to land and they seem to know their business," he said, and then in contradiction of his own assertion he gave a cry of warning. With inexcusable carelessness they had headed our frail craft directly across the bows of a torpedo-boat which was making rapidly for the mouth of the harbor. Tommy's cry was reechoed by the lookout and I heard the jangling of bells in the engine-room; but with one last stroke which made our escape impossible the rowers sent our boat ahead and then went overboard like turtles sliding from a log. We, too, went over just as the razorlike bow of the torpedo-boat cut our tiny skiff in two, diving as deeply as we could to avoid her screws.

We were both good swimmers and I was not seriously alarmed; for a dip in the warm, clear water of the Mediterranean is not dangerous; but when I turned to come to the surface again I felt my legs caught by a powerful grip. I never could tell just what happened. I have a confused memory of striking out blindly and of catching with one hand the thick hair of a man's head. With the other I was feeling for his throat when he deliberately bit me and then without compunction my thumb went to his eye. The next thing I remember I was being hauled into the dingey from the torpedo-boat by a sturdy jacky, while two others were working at the other side of it trying to pull Tommy and a man whom he had by the throat on board. I heard them laughing and swearing in turn as they would get them half up and then lose them when Tommy tore loose and with his free hand smashed in the face repeatedly the man he held; but he finally desisted from sheer weariness and they managed to pull them both over the side.

"The blighter deserves all you've given 'im, sir; but the beggar's 'arf dead," remonstrated one of the sailors,

grinning as he forced Tommy's clenched fingers from the boatman's throat. "'E shouldn't be let loose in a boat, sir; for never did I see such hawkwardness."

"He's handy enough with a knife!" sputtered Tommy, pointing to a long, clean cut in his coat. "He wasn't satisfied with trying to drown us; but the brute tried to stab me under water. Where's the other?" he demanded turning to me.

"This is what I got," I answered ruefully, holding up a lacerated hand. "He bit me and I had to break loose or suffocate."

"'Ere 'e is!" shouted the sailor in the bow, lunging out with his boathook, and a moment later he pulled the unconscious form of the second boatman to the surface; and even though I knew he had deliberately tried to kill me I shuddered at the evidence of my handiwork; for he would never use his right eye again. An impatient inquiry from the torpedo-boat, demanding if the dingey was going to be all day about the rescue, cut off discussion and a moment later we were alongside, hoisted on board and the slim craft had again gathered headway.

"I'm sorry I can't stop to set you gentlemen on shore," said the lieutenant in command courteously. "I am on emergency service which will not brook delay. I can fit you out with dry togs and I shall have you back here in a few hours."

"Can't you put us in a shore-boat?" asked Tommy irritably. "I have business on shore which will not wait and——"

"One moment, please," interrupted the lieutenant quickly. "My business may be a matter of life and death. I have obtained the admiral's permission to cruise in search of a man who disappeared from the Tunis boat last night and minutes may count. I know that you will understand my personal reasons for avoiding delay when I tell you that that man is my brother."

"Victor Gerard is your brother?" exclaimed Tommy, and the officer nodded.

"He is; I am Lieutenant Francis Gerard of the Royal Navy. Did you know him? Can you tell me anything which may be of service in my quest?" Tommy hesitated for a moment.

"I knew your brother only very slightly," he answered slowly. "I don't believe that I can be of much service to you in finding him; for I fear that he is drowned; but we can, I think, be of service to each other in solving the mystery of his death."

"If you knew him better, you would know that there is a good chance of his being alive," answered the lieutenant confidently. "He is one of the best amateur swimmers in England and I understand that the ship was in the midst of the fishing-fleet when he went over. Now, if you gentlemen will go below, my steward will give you the run of my lockers and when you are comfortable we can go into the whole matter. I'll see that your men are taken care of forward."

"You can hang them, for all of me, and welcome," answered Tommy; but nothing loath we went to the tiny cabin and changed to nondescript but comfortable apparel. While we dressed we exchanged experiences of our submersion and Tommy grinned as he held up the fingers of one hand.

"That's about the number of the recent attempts," he said ticking them off. "They pretty nearly got us that time; for these brutes can stay under water as long as a whale can, and I'll never be nearer death until it gets me. If I were the skipper of this boat I'd keel-haul 'em until I knew who put them up to the job."

"I think the fellow who tackled me has had enough," I answered gravely. "I had to gouge him, Tommy."

"You needn't apologize to me," he said indifferently. "It isn't a style of fighting that either one of us is partial to; but if I'd had time to think of it I believe that I should have taken both eyes out of my chap. It was a shark's trick and deserved shark's punishment. After all, it may prove a piece of luck, though, this meeting with Gerard's brother."

We found him leaning on the rail of his miniature bridge when we went on deck, and there was a strange expression on his face when he joined us. Tommy introduced himself and then performed the same service for me.

"We can furnish all sorts of verification and references when we get back to Valetta; but for the moment you'll have to take us on faith," he said glancing at our ill-assorted and ill-fitting garments.

"I have had proof that you are men of your hands," answered the lieutenant gravely. "Mr. Williams, your boatmen are both in rather bad shape, according to the doctor's report."

"I hope so," answered Tommy cheerfully. "They deliberately ran the boat in front of you and after that tried to make a sure thing of it by holding us under water. It's all part of the same game, Mr. Gerard, and in some way which I cannot yet explain connected with your brother's disappearance."

"Will you kindly tell me how, since you knew him so slightly?" he said coldly. "Can you assign any reason for his going overboard?" I noticed that Tommy instinctively braced himself to ward off a possible attack before he answered.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I can't tell you the remote cause; but the immediate one is easily surmised. I regret to tell you, Mr. Gerard, that your brother had been drinking so heavily that he was suffering from delirium tremens."

"Absurd!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "Poor old Victor was one of the most abstemious men I ever knew. He never took more than a glass of wine with his dinner."

"Then he must have changed; for to my certain knowledge he took the better part of a couple of bottles of champagne with it last night and afterward I saw him put away in fifteen minutes sufficient Scotch whisky to have satisfied a moderate drinker for a week. When did you see your brother last?"

"It's more than two years; I've just returned from the China station on the *Edgar*," answered the lieutenant, and I

saw that he was still unconvinced. "There can't be a mistake in identity, Mr. Williams, I suppose? I know that he was in Algiers, and I have been on the lookout for him here."

"Did he know that you were stationed at Malta?" asked Tommy quickly, and Gerard shook his head.

"I doubt it," he answered slowly. "I have only just been detailed here. I was detached from the *Edgar* on her homeward cruise."

"Mr. Gerard, do you know the Countess of Cransac?"

"I never heard of her," replied the lieutenant, shaking his head.

"Perhaps under another name," suggested Tommy. "She is a striking-looking woman; tall, with a beautiful figure; a classical head and features. She has jet black hair, a very white skin, red lips, and large eyes with extremely long lashes which usually conceal them. Her Christian name is, I believe——"

"Diana!" exclaimed Francis Gerard, his own ruddy face growing white beneath the tan of wind and sun as he grasped the rail of the bridge. Tommy nodded, but before Gerard could answer there came a hail from the lookout.

"Fishing-smack making signals off the port bow, sir!" he called, and instantly discipline and habit asserted themselves and the lieutenant pulled himself together and ordered the quartermaster to change the course to bring us alongside. This, at the speed we were going, took but a few minutes to accomplish and within a quarter of an hour Victor Gerard, lashed securely to a spar to prevent him from injuring himself or others, was hoisted to the deck raving in delirium.

VII.

The skipper of the smack reported that a half-hour after the Tunis steamer passed them they discovered a man swimming aimlessly, and although he was at least fifteen miles from land he endeavored to avoid rather than to attract their attention. When they sailed

toward him he dodged about and swam under water to keep out of their way; but concluding that he was insane they took him on board, in spite of his vigorous verbal and physical protest. Once on the deck of the smack he had fought desperately, and for their own protection, as well as to keep him from again jumping into the sea, they had been obliged to bind him.

The torpedo-boat was immediately headed for Valetta and Francis Gerard had his brother carried to his own cabin, accompanying the surgeon, who shook his head dubiously after a hasty examination of the rescued man. Tommy and I were for the moment left to our own devices; for the lieutenant had apparently forgotten our presence on board in his anxiety about his brother; and trouble enough we had on that small deck to find a secluded corner. The petty officers and crew were evidently consumed with curiosity and manufactured duties which would bring them near us; so that we had little opportunity for private speech.

"I don't know that discussion would tend to clarify this mud-puddle, at any rate," said Tommy when we finally found a spot out of earshot. "I conclude that it will be a long time before anything intelligent can be elicited from Victor Gerard and his brother seems to mistrust us. The only thing we know is that the charming countess is a family acquaintance; but I don't——"

"You gentlemen will excuse my neglect, I am sure," interrupted Francis Gerard, who had come up quietly behind us. "I owe you another apology as well, Mr. Williams. You were quite right as to the cause of my brother's condition. The surgeon confirms your statement that he had been drinking to excess."

"And I quite believe your statement that it is a recently acquired habit with him, Mr. Gerard," acknowledged Tommy. "He had none of the earmarks of the confirmed drunkard. Your sister seemed entirely unable to prevent——"

"My sister?" exclaimed Gerard, bewildered plain on his face. "I have no sister!"

"Then who, may I ask, is Diana, Countess of Cransac?" demanded Tommy abruptly and the lieutenant's teeth snapped together.

"Mr. Williams, I suppose that under the circumstances you consider that you have a right to ask that question; but it is one which I must refuse to answer," he said. "In fact, I fear that I must ask you to forget, so far as possible, anything which you have learned concerning my brother and the woman to whom you refer as the Countess of Cransac. Would it be asking too much if I suggested that you allow the whole matter to drop?"

"Lieutenant Gerard, you were on the bridge at the time that our boat was cut down this morning," replied Tommy quietly. "You must know, as well as I do, that it was not an accident; it was a deliberate attempt on the part of our boatmen to drown us and they tried to clinch matters by attacking us under water."

"To the first part of it I can testify and I shall be very willing to if you prefer charges against them," assented Gerard.

"That is a small part of it," answered Tommy. "When I tell you that it was the fourth attempt upon us within the past forty-eight hours; a period coinciding very closely with that of our acquaintance with your brother and this woman, you can see that I should be most unwise to make rash promises. I can't hope to escape many more times and it's getting monotonous."

"Do I understand that you accuse either or both of them of being concerned in these attacks?" asked Gerard coldly.

"I made no accusation; but I stated facts from which you can make your own inferences," answered Tommy, and his expression was no less determined than that of the man whom he faced. "There are other circumstances which I might have gone into if you had met me with equal frankness; but under the circumstances I shall keep my own counsel."

"And I shall be obliged to keep the confidences of others until I have per-

mission to speak," retorted Gerard defiantly. "I presume that you are under no immediate apprehension of attack from my brother, whom the surgeon assures me must be kept helpless with sedatives for the next few days if we save him."

"I have been able to take care of myself up to date, and I'm not under apprehension of any one," replied Tommy, stung into irritability by the sarcasm of the other's tone. "I fear that you will regret your own decision; for I had no intention of being anything but kindly; but that's your lookout and I'm not responsible." I hoped that Gerard would reconsider; for into Tommy's eyes I saw creep the expression which meant trouble for every one who got in his way; but with a curt rejoinder that he knew his own business best he turned on his heel and went to the bridge, where without special invitation we were not at liberty to follow him. Tommy turned to me with a sardonic grin on his face and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid that we've been threatening to disturb one of those fine old crusted British family skeletons," he said grimly. "I'm not fond of delving in family graveyards; but when the ghosts are of the variety which stab you in the back it's a man's duty to lay 'em for his own protection. I don't feel quite at liberty to tell a man to go to blazes when I'm wearing his clothes, though; so I'm going below to change." That process proved a slow one; for our wet garments had required considerable attention to make them any way presentable and the torpedo-boat was again at anchor in the harbor of Valetta before we came on deck. Tommy looked about and drew my attention to a shore-boat which was nearing the landing.

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, our boatmen are in that," he exclaimed. "It doesn't seem like playing the game fair to give them the start without notifying us." He hailed another to come alongside; but it was promptly and energetically warned to keep off by the quartermaster at the gangway.

"Are we prisoners, Mr. Gerard?"

asked Tommy of the lieutenant, who at that moment came toward us.

"Certainly not; but I was about to ask you to go on shore with me in the dingey. I can assure you that there will be no attempt to drown you," he answered. "Even the harbor has its dangers, you know."

"I believe that you allowed the boatmen to land in any way they pleased," remarked Tommy suspiciously, and Gerard smiled as he glanced toward the landing-stage.

"They will not escape you, Mr. Williams; Malta is not easy to get away from, you know, and it affords few hiding-places. You have marked them both for identification." Tommy was boiling inwardly but he did not trust himself to reply; and after a considerable lapse of time the dingey was lowered and brought to the gangway. We preceded Gerard into it and it put us ashore. The telegraph-messenger was waiting at the landing-stage and handed Tommy another message; but even as he was signing for it we were each accosted by men whom no one could have mistaken for anything but plain-clothes police officers.

"In the king's name, Mr. Williams," said the one who had touched him on the shoulder and his companion made a remark of similar tenor to me.

"The charge?" asked Tommy quietly.

"Aggravated assault on two British subjects, Tomasso Massa and Juan Gomez," answered the officer and Tommy bowed ceremoniously to Lieutenant Gerard.

"I have you to thank for this, I imagine, Mr. Gerard," he said. "Of course, the charge is ridiculous and will fall to the ground, but I suppose that the delay will serve your ends."

"I would remind you that this is a civil, not a naval arrest," replied Gerard; but the bluster of his tone did not carry conviction and with a contemptuous glance which plainly indicated his unbelief Tommy turned to the officer and announced that he was ready to accompany him.

"I think that we are better off in a

safe, comfortable jail than any place else for a time," he said to me as he handed me the telegram he had just read. It was from Le Garde and was couched in strong language, announcing his intention of rejoining us as soon as he could get to Malta and begging us to be on our guard every moment until his arrival. Tommy looked at me warningly and motioned to me to hold my tongue when I returned the telegram, which he shoved into his pocket as we walked up the quay.

We were well enough treated by the police, who seemed to be a little in doubt themselves as to the strength of the case against us; but I was rather puzzled that Tommy made no counter-charge nor attempt to explain. The inspector allowed him to despatch a cable to our Paris bankers for additional funds and offered to notify the American consul of our arrest; but Tommy declined that service and proffered only the readily granted request to allow us the same cell.

"There's no use butting our heads against a stone wall," he remarked philosophically as he surveyed the not uncomfortable but sufficiently secure room to which we were assigned. "We have received the double-cross from Lieutenant Francis Gerard; but he may be doing us a valuable service unwittingly."

"It is Le Garde's telegram which has reconciled you to this?" I said interrogatively.

"For one thing; the need of a few hours of peaceful sleep for another," answered Tommy. "I don't suppose they will arraign us before to-morrow morning, and if I find this apartment comfortable I shall ask for a remand until that Frenchman gets here."

"What's the meaning of his telegram, Tommy?" I demanded eagerly; for I felt that he must have read something between the lines to reconcile him to this forced inactivity.

"You can guess as well as I can; but I think that the murder of Ben Said must carry a significance of which we know nothing," he replied after a most prodigious yawn. "My dear boy,

I feel safer here than I have in the past two days and I'm going to sleep. In the meantime, I feel that our interests are in safe hands; for Francis Gerard is looking after them."

"I sha'n't let you sleep until you explain that!" I exclaimed, standing over him when he threw himself on his cot. "I agree with the direct accusation which you made; for I believe that he instigated our arrest."

"Exactly; I am sure of it," answered Tommy as he stretched himself out luxuriously. "You can see what a perfectly idiotic proceeding that was, and I count upon his stupidity to help us more while we are locked up than our own superior quality of brains could do if we were at liberty. When a man has anything to conceal, the best thing he can do is to sit tight and do nothing. If he gets busy and tries to cover tracks, he usually succeeds only in making a trail which a blind man could follow. I have estimated the quality and quantity of brains which Francis Gerard possesses and that's why I'm going to sleep to give him a chance to mismanage things." He had hardly ceased speaking before a gentle snore which I knew was not simulated came from his couch and there was nothing left for me to do but to follow his example.

Sleep refreshed us both, but it brought little enlightenment, and when we were awakened by the warder who brought us our supper we ate it in silence. We were not denied the solace of tobacco, and after Tommy had lighted his cigarette and again stretched himself out on the couch his tongue loosened up.

"For two men who were animated only by a desire to lead the simple life, we have been having excitement handed to us pretty regularly for the past two days," he said regretfully as he watched the blue wreath forming over his head. "It seems about a year ago that I bargained with the late lamented Ben Said for that embroidered cape and brought sixty-seven different varieties of trouble about our ears."

"I believe that the infernal thing is

at the bottom of it all," I assented. "I wonder what the deuce has become of it."

"I'm more concerned about what it might have contained," he answered. "Jewels, papers, a secret—what the deuce could it have been which made it worth while to attempt murder to obtain it, or to keep us from getting hold of it? I believe that we should have been left alone if we had never noticed it and I was stupid not to have ripped it to pieces." He smoked quietly for a moment and then, as if he had been vouchsafed an inspiration, suddenly sat erect and gave an exclamation of triumph.

"Great Scott, we've been criminally negligent!" he said. "I believe that I——" The insertion of a key in the lock interrupted him and he looked about impatiently.

"There's a lady with permission to visit you, sir," said the warder who entered and the increased respect of his manner showed that he was impressed. "Will you see her in the charge-room or here, sir?"

"I'm not sure that I want to see her at all—who is she?" answered Tommy not too graciously; for he was annoyed at the interruption.

"It's the Countess of Cransac, sir," replied the man deferentially, rolling the title over his tongue after the manner of his kind. Tommy nodded indifferently and threw away his cigarette.

"I'll receive her here; without attendance, if that is permissible," he answered and a moment later she entered and the door was locked behind her.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Williams; this is not my doing," she said extending her hand tentatively as if she feared a repulse and glancing about the bare, white-washed cell with an expression of pity in her large eyes. Tommy took her hand cordially and there was a twinkle of amusement in his as he offered her the limited choice of a seat on a small three-legged stool or on one of the couches.

"My only regret at the moment is that I can't make you comfortable," he

said, laughing. "I can assure you that I should feel indebted to you if I believed that you were responsible for our imprisonment."

"I am glad that you are not resentful; even if I am not the responsible one," she answered in a tone of relief and she smiled as she took her place on the couch which Tommy had vacated. "I think some one has bungled, Mr. Williams."

"I admit that I believe there have been several mistakes made in dealing with me," he said, grinning. "It would have been better to have tried milder measures before resorting to attempts at assassination."

"Are we going to play at cross-purposes?" she asked quickly and a little flush of red came to her white cheeks. "I am in a sufficiently difficult position."

"I should say in a very false one," answered Tommy dryly. "I should advise you to coach Francis Gerard into acknowledging you as his sister; it's going to be difficult to reconcile——"

"Please don't!" she interrupted hastily. "I haven't come here to talk about that, Mr. Williams; I want to come to terms with you, if you will be generous."

"That has been possible at any time during our short acquaintance, countess," suggested Tommy with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. "It shows the generosity of your nature that you wait until my pride has been humbled by imprisonment before proposing them. I am still open to conviction and willing to listen." For just a moment the lashes which had screened her eyes while he spoke raised and she looked at him half appealingly, half defiantly. She honored me, too, with a furtive glance; but in it there was nothing but appeal and in it I confess that I regretted Tommy's sarcasm.

"I have told you that I am in a difficult position and your attitude does not make it easier," she said with a suggestion of reproach in her voice. "I will be frank; the difficulty is not lessened by the fact that I am ignorant of the amount which you really know."

"Then it will make it easier for you, perhaps, if we assume that I know nothing at all," suggested Tommy; but the knowing smile which accompanied the suggestion implied that he knew a great deal more than the real facts warranted. The countess made a little gesture of impatience.

"In that case I should not have sought you here," she said. "We may as well come to the point at once; I want those papers and I am willing to do anything in reason to obtain them."

"I am convinced of that; I have reason to be," answered Tommy, and I knew that it was not easy for him to refrain from risking a glance of triumph at me. "May I ask why you believe that I have them?"

"When I find the covering which contained them in your possession, it is a fair assumption that you have," she replied quickly. "I don't know how you discovered the secret nor why you wish them, and I am willing to pay well for them. I will be honest enough to acknowledge that I believed you to be in league with the others at first; but as our acquaintance became more intimate I could hardly credit that. No matter what your object may be, I can safely promise that your ends will be better served by making terms with me."

"I'll be equally honest with you, countess," answered Tommy earnestly. "If I have been in negotiation with the others, it has been entirely unconscious on my part. I will confess that I do not even know who they are." She looked at him incredulously and half rose from the couch.

"I am afraid that our conversation will lead to nothing; it is a waste of time," she said coldly and Tommy motioned to her to resume her seat.

"Wait a moment, please; I can assure you that I am not trying to deceive you and my friend will bear like testimony if you desire it," he said. "In a nutshell, you believe that I have certain property which you wish to obtain because you saw delivered to me a certain cape which you thought concealed it. You even went to rather

unusual lengths in order to take it from me and——"

"You are putting it mildly; but I should not consider it theft to recover what was rightfully mine," she interrupted. "I don't know why you should have practised so much deception. When we called upon Ben Said he assured us that you had already purchased the cape. I understood that you had taken it with you from his bazaar that night; but you simulated surprise very cleverly when it was delivered to you on the steamer the following morning." Tommy was very thoughtful for a moment and when he spoke there was a ring in his voice which convinced me that he was beginning to see daylight through the veil of mystery.

"Countess, the delivery of that cape was as much of a surprise to me as it appeared to be," he protested. "I am very rapidly changing my opinion of you, which I am free to confess was not complimentary at the beginning of our acquaintance. If you are willing to be absolutely frank with me I shall be with you. If not, in all fairness I advise you to leave me now and to keep out of my way; for in this short interview you have already betrayed more than I have been able to discover for myself in two days. That implies that you must trust me absolutely, and I pledge you my word that you will find me no inconsiderable ally and not without a certain amount of power to help you. I presuppose in making this proposition that your motives are honest and that it will require nothing discreditable on the part of either of us." It was her turn to be thoughtful and she considered for a long time before she answered.

"Mr. Williams, I believe that I can trust you and so far as it concerns only myself I am willing to act on that belief," she said finally. "You can ask what questions you please and I shall give you no false nor misleading answers. Will you be satisfied with that and not demand that I answer questions which I feel I cannot do without betraying secrets which are not my own?"

"I suppose that I have no right to ask more," replied Tommy, but there was evidence of disappointment in his manner in spite of his acceptance. "I assume that the forbidden subjects are those which relate to the nature of the contents of the papers."

"Among others," she assented. "It would be better for you to ask direct questions, Mr. Williams; for after your warning I am afraid of my own indiscretion if I ramble on." Tommy nodded and asked permission to smoke, which she accorded.

"One thing which you betrayed and of which I was ignorant is the fact that you visited Ben Said in the Sooks after we left there. I assume that it was for the purpose of obtaining possession of that cape, or rather of the papers which it contained, and that on hearing that it was in my care you came to the Hôtel de France with the express purpose of making our acquaintance. Did you, or Victor Gerard to your knowledge, make an attempt to get it that night?"

"A very feeble one, owing to his half-intoxicated condition," she answered. "He entered your room while I stood watch in the hallway and we planned, in case you should be awakened, that we should pass it off as a mistake. I was to call to him and he would appear to be drunker than he really was."

"There was to be no attempt to silence me?" demanded Tommy quickly, and she shook her head.

"We were hardly prepared to go to such lengths," she said. "Later, when I had grown desperate, I believe that I should have hesitated at nothing." He looked at her suspiciously; but her eyes met his without flinching. "I told you that on the steamer, Mr. Williams."

"Yes, but I wished to be sure that it was a later development," he answered dryly. "I may assume that you did not grow desperate very quickly; that you had no part in arranging the apparent accident which so nearly killed me when I was boarding the steamer?"

"I never, until this moment, suspected that it was not entirely accidental!" she exclaimed, and the sincerity

of her voice carried conviction. "I am not an assassin, Mr. Williams, although I can imagine circumstances which might oblige me to kill in self-defense. I trust that you will believe that."

"I shall tell you why I had reason to suspect otherwise," he replied gravely. "I knew that Victor Gerard, whom I supposed to be under your influence and who had introduced you as his sister, visited my room that night and it was only due to the fact that I had taken precautions to protect myself that I was not killed. An attempt to stab me was made by some one." She started to protest, but he held up his hand and checked her.

"Wait a moment, that is not all," he continued. "It was your trunk which so nearly killed me, and again Victor Gerard was in evidence, standing at the elbow of the man who was directly responsible. You have admitted that you visited the shop of Ben Said in the Sooks for the purpose of obtaining that cape. He was not wise enough to take adequate precautions to protect himself; for since I have arrived in Malta I have heard that he was brutally murdered and his place ransacked; apparently to obtain this very cape which was thrust upon me and which you were so anxious to get hold of that you offered an absurdly high price for it."

In the great eyes which looked at him while he spoke had appeared first incredulity and then fear; but when he finished they were distended wide with horror and she jumped from the couch and faced him.

"Don't!" she exclaimed. "I am helpless; I don't know whom I can trust. I must answer no more questions; I must leave you!"

"Not yet," said Tommy soothingly. "I shall not intrude upon your confidence, countess, and you need not fear me. Honestly, I wish to serve you."

"But I fear every one!" she exclaimed piteously. "Victor I have trusted as I would myself; for I never believed him capable of this. It is incredible; but I know you would not attempt to deceive me about it; you must be sure of your facts."

"I am; but you have deceived yourself if you have concluded from my remarks that I accuse Victor Gerard of attempting to stab me and of having murdered Ben Said," answered Tommy.

"But he was in your room that night and afterward he disappeared from the hotel and was absent until daylight!" she exclaimed. "I am telling you this in confidence; for I should not bear witness against him."

"There will be no occasion for that; for he will never be accused," said Tommy, but she was still unconvinced.

"Who could it have been, then; who knew anything about where the papers were?"

"That is just what I am trying to find out, and I shall if you will help me," replied Tommy sharply. "Perhaps the quickest way for us to arrive at that result is for you to tell me all that you know about Celeste Angier, alias Angelo Cappuro."

"You do know that—she was right in saying that you recognized her, then?" said the Countess interrogatively, and Tommy nodded.

"Of course I know it, and I more than suspect that she knows more about this whole mystery than either you or I!" he exclaimed irritably. "I hope that isn't one of the forbidden topics."

"Oh, but it is; the most strictly forbidden of all," she answered quickly. "Mr. Williams, I can't say another word without betraying confidences which are not mine. Will you give me those papers?"

"I shall not; for several reasons," he answered positively, and she ran to the door and knocked on it to be let out.

"I am sorry; but I dare not remain here," she said as the key turned, and then when the door opened she darted through it before Tommy could make a protest.

"I might have added that the principal one, which made all others superfluous, was that I didn't have 'em," he said, turning to me with a satisfied grin on his face. "Things seem to be

coming our way now; we have learned that it was papers that the cape concealed, I suspect that they had been removed before it was confided to me and——" He hesitated aggravatingly until I was stung into asking him to finish by my curiosity.

"I thought that perhaps you might have one of your flashes of genius," he continued. "The most important thing of all is that I believe we can eliminate the countess from the active attempts against us."

"And suspect whom?" I asked eagerly.

"Some one who has it in for us for reasons entirely apart from our supposed possession of those papers," he replied, and then to give me opportunity to draw my own conclusions he remained obstinately deaf to questions while he prepared for bed.

VIII.

Our arraignment in court the following morning proved to be, as Tommy had predicted, farcical. With the adornment of much verbose legal phraseology the charges against us were droned out by the clerk, after which we pleaded "not guilty" and the names of the complainants were called. Their testimony was not forthcoming, however; for both of those loyal subjects, Tomasso Massa and Juan Gomez, had disappeared from the ken of the police. Inquiry elicited the reluctant admission that they both had sailed away from Valetta at daybreak in a schooner which was bound for Sicily and after a half-hour of tiresome formalities we were discharged from custody for lack of prosecutors.

"It doesn't take long to destroy a man's ability to take care of himself, and I rather regret the peace, quietness and freedom from anxiety of our dungeon cell," remarked Tommy, grinning as we left the court together. "I didn't approve of their alleged coffee, though; so I move that we hunt up a decent hotel." We were on our way to do that when again we were each touched on the shoulder from be-

hind; but instead of finding police officers when we wheeled quickly about, we faced Le Garde, who very apparently would have liked to embrace us both.

"Great Scott, where did you drop from?" exclaimed Tommy. "I figured that you couldn't reach here until tomorrow morning at the earliest!"

"Nor could I have done so by the regular steamer; but I came on a torpedo-boat destroyer from Marseilles and under forced draft all the way," replied Le Garde. "We dropped anchor here ten minutes ago."

"The French government must be getting reckless about its coal expenditure, or the republic is endangered, then," said Tommy, looking at him curiously. "What is it, Le Garde; have you discovered that Van Osten has a successor?" The Frenchman looked about him suspiciously and made a little gesture of caution.

"I think that we would be wise to find a less public place to discuss my news," he said in a low voice. "It is so serious that I can't tell you how relieved I am to find that neither of you gentlemen has come to harm."

"It isn't for lack of opportunity nor lack of good-will on the part of several gentlemen who, I am sorry to say, must be nameless," answered Tommy grinning as he led the way to the Hotel Victoria on the plaza. "This place looks dead enough to be safe and quiet, and we can talk over our breakfast. Now, Le Garde, out with it," he continued when he had found a retired table in the great dining-room, which was practically deserted at that hour. "I hope that you can tell us who has been trying to do us up with such admirable persistence during the past few days."

"No, I can't tell you the names until I hear the details; but I can tell you who has instigated all the attempts," replied the detective, shaking his head. "It is a Van Osten conspiracy." Tommy looked at me triumphantly and grinned.

"I told you that my quotation covered the ground!" he exclaimed. "Le Garde, I hope that you haven't wasted

all this energy just to tell us something which I guessed the first thing?"

"You guessed it!" exclaimed the Frenchman incredulously, and I saw that his vanity was hurt by the failure to make a dramatic impression.

"My dear fellow, I didn't for a moment suppose that the web of crime and fabric of conspiracy which he had built up during years of activity would be obliterated the moment he sank beneath the waves," answered Tommy with just a touch of superiority in tone and manner. "I did hope that his death would save us from any more connection with it, however, and that the ordinary police methods would be sufficient to round up his tools and accomplices." A strange light came to the great detective's eyes and his fingers gave a jaunty upward twist to the waxed ends of his mustache.

"Your information is not positive then; you are merely going on supposition and guesswork?" he said interrogatively, and when Tommy nodded assent it was the Frenchman whose manner was patronizing, and I instinctively recognized that Tommy was riding the high horse toward a bad fall. "Unfortunately, that is poor evidence in a court of law, and that's where the despised routine measures of the police lead to," continued Le Garde. "Accurate knowledge is essential and, if you will permit me to say so, in the long run it is more valuable in dealing with criminals than any amount of guesswork and theory."

"But it is often theory which leads us to that accurate knowledge," argued Tommy. "Imagination is a valuable asset." Le Garde nodded and there was an aggravating smile on his lips which the mustache did not conceal.

"Very valuable; but still not to be compared with exact and reliable information," he said. "For instance, I grant that your deductions that your recent troubles are the result of your fight against Van Osten were more or less justified; but my accurate information that he is not dead; that he was rescued——"

"What!" exclaimed Tommy and I in

chorus of amazement and disbelief, and certainly the wound to the detective's vanity at his first failure was healed by the complete success of his dramatic announcement. For a moment he enjoyed his triumph in silence while we plied him with questions which it would have taken a day to answer and there was a mischievous twinkle in his eyes when he looked at Tommy.

"I am stating only the exact truth," he said quietly. "It was entirely justifiable to believe that the man was dead, if the evidence of our own senses can be accepted; for we distinctly saw him disappear under circumstances which seemed to preclude his rescue. You may remember that we scanned the whole sea for the possible presence of another ship and there was nothing in sight?" Tommy and I both gave eager confirmation.

"We forgot to search the air for flying machines—I suppose that is the explanation," he added sarcastically, and Le Garde shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Hardly as advanced as that, Mr. Williams; but still one of the late developments of science which made the rescue possible," he replied. "It so happened that the French naval authorities were conducting experiments to learn the value of submarines. Four of those craft had been detailed to intercept a cruiser which sailed from Algiers for Marseilles, and which was instructed to attempt to evade them. When Monkey Paw carried Van Osten overboard, one of them was very near to us, having come up to reconnoiter us. She was naturally running without lights and submerged so that only her periscope showed above the surface. After we gave up the search for our lost passengers and got under headway the submarine rose to the surface again and when they raised the covering to the manhole which leads to the bridge they found two men lying on the deck. One of them was dead; the other pretty nearly so from a terrible injury to his throat and his submersion.

"Unfortunately they carried a skil-

ful surgeon, and he managed to restore him, or rather to keep life in him. He could give no account of himself, and they contented themselves with caring for him until they returned to port, when the whole matter was referred to me for investigation. I at once telegraphed to Marseilles to detain the rescued man; but he must have assumed greater illness and weakness than the facts warranted; for when the police boarded the submarine to arrest him he had disappeared and they were unable to locate him. There is no doubt as to the identity; Monkey Paw was the dead man with six inches of cold steel in his throat and the other was Van Osten!"

"And so ends my dream of a peaceful life and dalliance in the pleasant paths of art," groaned Tommy. "I suppose that your reckless expenditure of coal and nervous energy to reach here so quickly was not entirely due to fears for our safety and that the fight is on again."

"In that your deductions are entirely correct," admitted Le Garde, smiling. "In fact, it was your telegram which suggested to me the probable scene of it or, rather, the information I obtained in making inquiries which would enable you to answer my questions. Now, since you are in possession of my most important news, I should suggest that you tell me just what has happened to you since we parted and what led you to make those inquiries concerning the Countess of Cransac and Victor Gerard." We should have preferred to hear his side of the story first; but he was good-naturedly obdurate and between us we told him of our adventures, the attempts upon our lives and the details of our acquaintance with the countess and her alleged brother.

"Has either of you lost your hearts to the fair lady?" he asked half earnestly when we had finished the recital and waited anxiously for his news. Tommy gave an exclamation of impatience and said something uncomplimentary about the French axiom that there is always a woman in the case; but just the same

I noticed that he didn't meet Le Garde's eyes.

"Let us assume that she is entirely worthy of regard until we find proof to the contrary," continued the detective with a significant wink at me. "So far, I have discovered nothing discreditable in her record."

"Let's have it!" demanded Tommy curtly.

"It will simplify matters to go back a little," answered Le Garde quietly. "In the first place, you probably remember the details, so far as they were published, of the assassination of the King and Queen of Servia. It is not yet ancient history."

"Yes, I remember it perfectly, although it was bloody and horrible enough to have happened in the dark ages," answered Tommy.

"Exactly, so you will not be surprised to learn that Van Osten played a very active part in it," said Le Garde. "You know that it has always been suspected that the present king, in spite of all the horror he expressed at the butchery and his apparent reluctance to leave his peaceful retreat in Switzerland to ascend the bloody throne, was really at the bottom of the conspiracy. This was more than suspected by the members of the diplomatic corps; it was brought home as definitely as such things can be without direct, or documentary evidence. The latter existed, gentlemen, and it has hung like the sword of Damocles over the head of the present ruler."

"England and one or two other powers withdrew their ministers from Servia because the new monarch received and loaded with honors the assassins whose hands were red with the blood of his predecessors, and if you know anything of the political methods of the Balkan states you will appreciate that King Peter would have had them removed if he had not feared them. His position is none too secure, and so long as these documents which prove his complicity in the conspiracy exist he dares not move against a single one of the men whose presence at his court prevents his recognition as a civilized

ruler by the more enlightened countries."

"And it is these documents which all our trouble has been about?" asked Tommy quickly.

"I believe so; for they were at one time in Van Osten's possession," answered Le Garde earnestly. "I believe them to have been stolen from him. It is known that they were concealed in such a cape as you describe; a piece of embroidery fashioned into that form for the murdered queen, Draga. That disappeared from the palace the night of the murder, and it was believed to have been taken by one of the regicides; a man whom I have pretty well identified as Van Osten, who at that time passed under the name of Volnski."

"The same by which the Countess of Cransac was known in Paris!" exclaimed Tommy, flushing.

"Yes, and to which she was no more entitled than he," said Le Garde dryly.

"Who is she?" demanded Tommy, and the fierce earnestness of his tone belied his disclaimer of interest in her.

"In good time I hope that we shall discover," replied Le Garde, looking at him intently. "It is curious that she should have borne the names of two men both of them interested in the Servian affair but with interests opposed. The Count of Cransac was an Austrian diplomat and Austria, although well enough pleased to have the ruler of Servia changed, was opposed to the succession of King Peter. The emperor favored the elevation of the Princess Sonia, a cousin of the murdered king; but she had long been lost to the world's knowledge. It has transpired, however, that she was virtually a prisoner of Russia, detained in seclusion at Warsaw. It was there that the Count of Cransac is supposed to have found her and the discovery closely coincides with his mysterious disappearance from the scene of his former activities. When I tell you that Russia supports the present king of Servia, you can, perhaps, make a conjecture as to what happened to him. I know, however, that his efforts were not entirely without result; the Princess

Sonia escaped from Russia and her present whereabouts is unknown."

"Her description?" asked Tommy eagerly, and Le Garde drew a case from his pocket and taking a photograph from it handed it over.

"Unfortunately I am unable to furnish it; but here is a photograph taken when she was twelve years of age; just before she was sent to Russia to finish her education. She should be about twenty-five years of age now." Tommy examined the photograph carefully for a moment and then slipped it into his own pocket without showing it to me. I should have asked for it; but he gave me a warning glance and I held my peace.

"Now that you have told us about the troubles of the crowned heads of Europe, suppose that you enlighten us as to the cause of our own," he suggested and Le Garde smiled.

"I have reason to believe that the Princess Sonia was very lately in Algiers," he continued, "and I believe that the object of her visit was to recover that cape, which she had heard of as being offered for sale in the bazaars there. The owners were supposed to be in entire ignorance of its contents, which would have been invaluable to her; the price of a throne, in fact; for once in her possession the days of King Peter would be short as a king. I also know that his emissaries were also searching for it there and, last but not least important to us, Van Osten was also on the trail of his stolen property. It disappeared mysteriously from Algiers, however, and it shows how hot they were on the trail of it that they discovered pretty close to the same time that it was being offered for sale by Ben Said in the Tunisian Sooks."

"Did he know of its contents?" asked Tommy, and Le Garde shrugged his shoulders.

"Probably not when he offered it to you; but he did before he died, I believe," he answered indifferently. "Have you had the full details of that crime?"

"Only that unsigned telegram," answered Tommy.

"I have a full report. He was killed

about four in the morning following your last visit to him. We know that he was visited by a man and a woman immediately after he returned from his walk with you, and from what you have told me I conclude that they were your friends. Their anxiety to obtain it put him on his guard, and he refused to sell, although we know that it was still in his shop. We know further that after their visit he received another from two men and that when their offers were refused there was an awful row and they used threats. My impression is that he became alarmed and preferred to get the thing out of his keeping. He trusted you and sent it to you, intending to demand a fancy price afterward and have you return it when the danger to him was over or he had come to a definite bargain with one of the others. It was no sooner out of his keeping than he received another visitor, however; one who was not accustomed to let any bargaining stand in his way. When I tell you that Ben Said was cruelly tortured before he was killed, you may be able to guess whom I suspect."

"The workmanship is familiar," admitted Tommy with a shudder, and he gave an exclamation of triumph.

"By Jove, you are right!" he said. "More than that, the telegram announcing the murder came from him. He knew that the others had the start of him and wished to get me excited about it so that I should not part with the cape until he had a chance at it."

"Precisely; we have arrived at the same conclusions from the same premises," answered Le Garde laughing. "Theories are all right, my dear friend; but only when they are formed from consideration of known facts."

"Never mind that; I don't have to form any theories to account for the attacks on us now that I know Van Osten is alive," replied Tommy grimly, and remembering the way he had pouched the photograph I believed that Le Garde was about due to be the spectator, not the producer of a dramatic dénouement. "He is probably in Malta at this moment."

"I have reason to believe that he landed from the Tunis boat this morning," admitted Le Garde. "I hope to have him before night; for I brought several of my men with me and they are watching every landing-stage. If Victor Gerard were in fit condition to talk, I believe that he could help us to locate him."

"Why?" asked Tommy and then turned to me quickly. "Great Scott! Perhaps the poor devil wasn't having hallucinations; it may have been the devil in the shape of Van Osten whom he saw behind us!"

"Van Osten has been a devil to him," said Le Garde gravely. "He practically ruined his career by tempting him to play beyond his means and in some way got him pretty well in his power. From him he stole papers which contained the minister's private report on the assassinations and the English secret service men believed that Gerard sold them to Russia. The proof was not definite enough to dismiss him from the service; but he has been in disgrace ever since, without an assignment and, I believe, has gone pretty much to the dogs."

"To drink, certainly; he is not a strong man," answered Tommy. "Le Garde, what's your theory about the Countess of Cransac?"

"That it is well that neither of you gentlemen lost your hearts to her," replied the detective significantly. "Royalty is not always free to follow the dictates of the heart."

"That wouldn't be an obstacle in this instance," said Tommy thoughtfully, and I saw his hand steal toward the pocket which contained the photograph. He had drawn it half out when the head waiter came toward us, ushering in an officer resplendent in full-dress uniform. He introduced himself as Major Shipley, military secretary to the governor and commander in chief.

"I am instructed to present his compliments and to desire your attendance at the palace," he said to Tommy and me; honoring the introduction to Le Garde only with a curt bow.

"Is this as imperative as the invita-

tion to another place which we received on landing yesterday?" asked Tommy.

"No, there seems to have been an unfortunate mistake about that affair," replied the major civilly. "I believe that his highness wishes to express his regrets in person. Will five this afternoon be convenient for you, gentlemen?"

"Quite," answered Tommy. "We shall be on hand."

"You will associate with royalty, in any case," suggested Le Garde. "You know that the governor is a brother of the king."

"Yes, but I've seen royalty under strange conditions lately," said Tommy, taking the photograph from his pocket. "Le Garde, you insinuate that the Countess of Cransac is in reality the Princess Sonia, pretender to the throne of Serbia."

"I suspect it," admitted Le Garde.

"Then she must have changed considerably since this was taken," said Tommy, grinning. "The person whom this represents doesn't look half as much a princess and she came ashore yesterday morning in the clothes of a man and under the name of Angelo Cappuro!"

IX.

Our reception at the palace of the governor was as free from formality as any intercourse with royalty could be and his highness apologized for the inconvenience to which we had been put by the unwarranted arrest. That in itself seemed uncalled for and unusual; but the explanation was apparent when after only a short preface he demanded from us the papers which he supposed us to possess.

"There is no use carrying the farce on longer," answered Tommy quietly. "We haven't those papers and neither one of us has ever set eyes on them."

"I am familiar with the manner of their concealment and the late adventures of the cloak," answered the governor, smiling. "Can you suggest what has become of them, Mr. Williams?"

"I suggest that they were removed

from it in my cabin, either by the princess——"

"One moment, please," interrupted the governor. "This is in strict confidence; but I am able to assure you that you are wrong. A certain lady did try to get that cape, Mr. Williams, and narrowly escaped capture at your hands. One of her devoted servants had previously searched the cape; but the papers were no longer in it. You can eliminate those two ladies, Mr. Williams."

"Then, it rests between Mr. Victor Gerard and the emissaries of a man who would give much to have them destroyed," replied Tommy confidently. "There was a third man after them; but I have every reason to believe that he was not on the steamer."

"You know him?" asked the governor.

"Under many names; if you have ever heard of him it was probably as the Baron Volnski." The governor's expression betrayed that he had heard the name, and it was evident that the associations which it recalled were not agreeable ones.

"If it is the man I believe I knew of by that name, he would not hesitate at theft," he said.

"Nor at torture, assassination or even regicide," added Tommy. "I have been informed that he is on this island."

"Have you notified the police of this, Mr. Williams?" asked the governor sharply.

"The chief of the French secret police is here after him; I think that he will be more competent to deal with him than your own," answered Tommy, and the governor smiled.

"You have reason to believe that our men are easily gulled; but there were reasons for your detention," he admitted. "I understand that you have lately been in great danger. Mr. Williams, I must see Le Garde at once; I am indebted to him for many services when I have visited France and I shall ask of him another. If you gentlemen will accompany me, I will leave you in more agreeable company until he arrives." We followed him to an adjoining room

and without speaking he went quickly out at another door and left us face to face with the Countess of Cransac and the woman we had known as her maid. The latter remained seated; but the Countess rose and smiled a welcome while she waited for her companion to speak.

"I think we may dispense with ceremony, Diana," she said. "It is difficult to expect homage from a man who has chased me like a fleeing criminal and has seen me in the character of a Levantine bagman." Tommy bowed low and respectfully kissed the hand which she extended.

"Princess, you will forgive the acts of a man who was fighting for his life and whose only excuse is his ignorance," he said quietly. "I trust that I may have the opportunity to serve you and that you will forget the anxieties I have caused you."

"I am so far convinced of your good intentions that I shall reward you in advance," she answered graciously, and then rising she beckoned to me. "And you, sir, I shall lecture in private," she continued, leading me to an adjoining anteroom, and I followed, appreciating that she wished to leave the others alone. Just what the Princess Sonia told me of the devotion to her of Diana, whom we had known as the Countess of Cransac, it is not my purpose to set down. They had been girlhood friends and companions until the policy of the Great Bear, then supreme in Servia, had sent the princess to the oblivion of exile and separated them with the iron hand within the velvet glove of diplomacy. Diana, born of an English mother wedded to one of the great Balkan nobles, had been taken to her mother's country, winning the love of her child playmates, Victor and Francis Gerard.

The devotion of neither of them had she returned in kind; but when the turn of fortune's wheel made it possible for her again to join the princess, then a fugitive from the wrath of the czar, fighting for the proofs which should place her on the throne to which she was entitled, she had forgotten every-

thing except the love she bore the princess. Her fortune, which was not inconsiderable, she had cheerfully devoted to the cause; the greater part of the inevitable risks she had insisted upon taking upon herself, and even Victor Gerard, placed under the ban of suspicion by his own countrymen, she had employed without scruple and with the promise of such reward as he might ask when that cause was won.

It was a sufficiently romantic history of intrigue and conspiracy that they had lived together; assuming names and titles as the exigencies of the changing situations demanded; changing the relative positions of mistress and maid to meet varying conditions; always in untiring pursuit of the evidence which would drive King Peter from the throne he had gained through murder and give to the princess what was rightfully hers. Draga's cape had been the will-o'-the-wisp which had led them through half of the bazaars of the Orient until at the last all of the trails which the different pursuers were following led to the tiny shop of Ben Said in the Tunisian Sooks. The large black eyes of the Princess Sonia were very tender and suspiciously moist when she concluded her story.

"I have the feeling that it has all been useless," she said hopelessly. "The Count of Cransac, my devoted friend, was killed, as has been many another gallant gentleman. Victor Gerard, loyal, simple and too honest to be suspicious, has been ruined in reputation and wrecked physically and mentally. Diana, big-hearted, generous and true, has earned for herself a martyrdom and a bitter one; for she has learned the hard lesson of the 'might have been.' My success could only make her misery deeper and my failure will, at least, be made more bearable by the knowledge that it spares her."

"But princess, if the recovery of those papers will insure your success, the chances seem brighter than they have ever been," I argued. "You are surrounded by powerful friends and we have every reason to believe that they are fairly within our grasp."

"They are; my instinct has never failed me in the search; but I feel that I shall never reach them," she answered. "I am doomed to misfortune, sir, and my only consolation is that my failure may save unhappiness to the woman to whom success would mean unending misery. I cannot betray confidences; but you might do much to —" She broke off abruptly, interrupted by the sudden appearance of the governor in the doorway.

"You will excuse me, Sonia, but this gentleman's presence is required at once," he said courteously and bidding the princess a formal farewell under his eyes I followed him to the room where he had first received us. Tommy entered even as I did and we found Le Garde waiting.

"The Baron Volnski, as I knew him, has not been idle," announced the governor curtly. "You will repeat what you have told me, Mr. Le Garde."

"It is what the gentlemen might expect, knowing him as they do," said Le Garde quietly. "He gained admission to the naval hospital, where Victor Gerard was a patient, in the garb of a priest. Victor Gerard is dead and papers which he carried about his waist in a waterproof belt have been stolen from his body."

"Murder?" said Tommy sharply.

"A dagger," answered Le Garde. "Van Osten made his escape from the hospital and fled across the island. My men and the local police are on his track now; but he was closely followed in his flight by two men whom we do not know."

"But whose identity we can guess," said Tommy quickly. "Unless I am mistaken it would be known to Peter of Servia and they are the same who rifled our luggage on the Tunis boat."

"And I would suggest that it is useless to theorize about a thing which is susceptible of demonstration," said Le Garde; a proposition to which the governor gave quick assent.

"There are certain things which I cannot know officially," he said significantly. "If the murderer of Victor Gerard is captured he will be dealt

with; but I should prefer to have nothing to do with matters political which may involve many explanations. I think that I may safely trust to the discretion of you gentlemen."

"You may assume that you will not even be troubled with the disposition of Victor Gerard's murderer if I get my hands on him," answered Tommy grimly, and forgetting even the courtesy due to the governor's rank he hurried us from the room.

Malta is a small speck on the bosom of the great Mediterranean; the scene of many a fierce assault from Turks and Saracens when the knights held it for the cross against the crescent; the fruit of Napoleon's victory during his meteoric career and the final reward of England's bulldog tenacity; but never had it seen a more determined man-hunt than we undertook in the rapidly falling darkness. Conveyances of all sorts and description had been requisitioned by those who had preceded us; but horses from the governor's own stables were at our disposition.

It was proof of Van Osten's desperation that he had played a lone hand at the last; but even so I believe he would have evaded us but for the unexpected pursuit of the two men who were after the papers in another cause. It was their close following which drove him from the point where the Sicilian schooner lay in the offing waiting for a strong swimmer, and close at his heels they forced him to refuge in a ruined watch-tower on a high cliff overhanging the sea. Once in it the pursued and pursuers must have made temporary truce; for three shots had been fired simultaneously when the officers would have followed, and when we came up to the ring of men which surrounded it one of Le Garde's men was coughing out his life from a wound in the chest.

The last act in that gruesome tragedy was characteristic of the life of villainy which the man had led; for he knew that escape was impossible. It was Tommy's hail and demand for surrender which must have convinced him of this; for his answer was a shout of ridicule, followed by a shot in the

darkness; the bullet whistling uncomfortably about our ears. A moment later a dark form was outlined sharply against the sky on the top of the tower and at a quiet command from Le Garde the waiting officers refrained from firing while Tommy stepped forward.

"We'll give you one more chance, Van Osten," he called. "Come down and surrender those papers and we'll guarantee a fair trial. If you refuse, we'll carry the tower if it costs a hundred men and kill you for the cur you are." For a moment there was no answer and then a flickering light appeared where the fugitive had crouched behind the low battlemented wall.

And then Van Osten's answer, defiant, insulting and derisive as he straightened up; his malignant face illuminated by the flare of a bundle of

burning papers which he held above his head. My own pistol rang out as did twenty others; the flaming papers were suddenly released and made a dozen fiery trails in the air and Van Osten, throwing his hands above his head reeled backward, tripped on the parapet and plunged a sheer hundred feet to the breakers below the cliff.

The others entered the tower, where I learned later that they found the bodies of two men who had been traitorously shot in the back by their quondam ally; but I stooped to recover a charred bit of paper which had fallen at my feet. Only a corner of the sheet remained; but when I read the signature "Peter Gregaravitch" I knew that the last hope of the Princess Sonia had been destroyed by Van Osten's mad defiance.

THE END.



SOMETHING LIKE A FARM!

THE biggest farm—if "farm" it can be called—is that owned by Don Luis Terrazas, in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, which measures from north to south 150 miles, and from east to west 200 miles, or 8,000,000 acres in all. On its prairies and mountains roam 1,000,000 head of cattle, 700,000 sheep, and 100,000 horses. The "farmhouse" is probably the most magnificent in the world, for it cost \$2,000,000 to build, and is more richly furnished than many a royal palace. On the homestead alone are employed a hundred male servants. The gardens are superbly laid out, the stables more magnificent than those of the German emperor, and there is accommodation for 500 guests, if necessary.

Scattered over this vast ranch are a hundred outlying stations, each one of which has charge of a certain portion of the estate. The horsemen, cow-punchers, line-riders, shepherds, and hunters number 2,000, and the Terrazas ranch is the only one in the world which maintains its own slaughtering and packing-plant. Each year 150,000 head of cattle are slaughtered, dressed, and packed, and 100,000 sheep. Don Luis personally superintends the different industries on his ranch, covering many thousands of miles on horseback during a twelve-month. Don Luis was at one time governor of Chihuahua, but public life did not suit him; it was too quiet, and he preferred to spend his life riding over the plains and looking after his own enterprises.



POOR JOHN!

THE vagaries of country journalism, to those who know them, are a source of endless amusement. The following, which appeared in a Soo, Michigan, paper some years ago, has the record beaten for genuine, heart-to-heart condolence:

"Mrs. Jno. Smith died on Wednesday, six weeks ago. Mr. Smith lost a valuable yoke of oxen through the ice. John has had awful poor luck this year."

A Run to Rio

By T. Jenkins Hains

Author of "The Black Barque," "The Luck of the Impulse," Etc.

Captain Blye and the crew of the *Seagull* catch a Tartar when they rescue a castaway at sea. Bahama Bill learns something about the wiles of women



MISS MOORE, late stewardess of the big six-master *Admiral* wrecked upon the Rocas, came on deck. She scanned the *Seagull* critically, for although she had been in the little sloop for a few days, ever since Bahama Bill had rescued her from the cabin of the wrecked vessel, she had not had a chance to see how the little ship behaved at sea. Inside the lagoon it was another matter. There all ships appeared alike to her for there was no motion and the accommodations, though cramped for ladies, were such as not to cause serious inconvenience. Out in the southern ocean it was different.

The long swell swung slowly and mightily out of the east, swung with that never-ending motion which comes from the eternal breath of the trade-wind, and it caused the little ship to wallow desperately along, plunging, rolling and slatting about, but withal making fine weather of it for a sailor and getting over the sparkling surface at a good rate of speed. The stewardess apparently did not like the motion. She grasped the masthead runner to port and clung fondly to its rigid length while she cast an unnautical eye about, an eye that held ill-concealed contempt and some scintillations of a more savage nature. The work below had not agreed with Miss Moore's temper this morning, and although she voluntarily

agreed to serve the meals aboard until the ship reached port, she had counted upon a more stable footing than that which she had encountered below in the confines of the trim but necessarily attenuated galley.

The *Seagull* was only a sixty-footer, and there is a great difference between a sixty-footer and the six-master. Captain Blye stood at the wheel and tried not to notice anything save the luff of the maintopsail. Hacksaw Johnson was below taking his watch down, for he had been up half the night. Bahama Bill had stood the morning watch, but the giant diver always preferred to spend his time on deck if the weather permitted and snooze and lounge either upon the cabin skylights or in the bunt of the mainsail. He now lay at full length upon the mainboom close to the mast. The sail bellied out and swung to and fro with the sea as it rolled the ship and jerked the boom. A preventer-brace, or guy upon the spar, held it and kept it from coming in amidships with the throw, the jerk as it filled again seeming not to bother the big black man at all. He snored away with the sunshine beating down upon his ugly features, one powerful hand clasping strongly, even in sleep, the roping of the sail, and the other lying upon his chest in a simple manner suggesting the quiet of childish repose.

Miss Moore looked at the sleeping beauty for some moments. Bahama Bill's features were not exactly classic, having many of the characteristics of

the noble sons of Ham, and principally a huge flat nose and wide, hard-set mouth. The red-rimmed eyes, rheumy and sore from exposure to salt water, were now full-closed and their black, sinister depths were out of sight.

"That's my hero," sneered the lady finally, nodding at the diver; "do you think he'd marry me now after saving me from the wreck?"

"Bill's already married," said Blye confidentially, grinning.

"That nothing—no reason why he shouldn't marry again—if he wants to," said Miss Moore sagaciously. "I've known men to marry more than once, especially black men—huh? My grandmother was a full-blooded African, so there's no question of caste, is there?—that's the reason I'm so dark-complected, sort of brunette. Don't you like dark women, cap?"

"Nicely, thanks, dark or pale, blonde or brunette—there's nothing like 'em," said Blye.

"Er—huhn, well, would you expect a girl like me to slave down below in a rig like this? I wouldn't do it fo' no man—no, sir, 'n' I wouldn't do it now but for this kind soul who saved my life," said Miss Moore, nodding again at the giant diver.

"Well, don't wake the poor fellow up until it's his watch on deck—he's tired enough," said Blye, rolling the wheel over a bit to meet her as the ship luffed to a sea.

"I'll wait a little while, but I'm sure going to have my say to that big coon," said Miss Moore. "He didn't have no right to save me if he's goin' to turn me loose again to work like a devil in a stinking ship—what's that land over there? Way off to the south'ard?"

"That's the mountains back of Cape St. Roque, Parahiba, I believe they call it, and right along down the coast is Pernambuco, where we'll go to give them the news about your shipmates. The telegraph is faster than this ship even though she's a flyer in a breeze, and it's only fair to get news to your agents as fast as possible. We're not afraid, now, to make an entry——"

"Oh, and right off to the eastward is

Fernando Noronha—what? The little rock where the men go when they are no good, er, well, do things, you know—er, huhn, there is good reason to remember it—but is it really only a couple of hundred miles away from where we are right now?"

"Yes, only about two hundred, but you needn't be afraid of convicts out here. They don't allow boats to land there and don't allow small boats to remain in existence when they get there, so you needn't worry if you are afraid"—Miss Moore looked at Blye queerly. Gave him a long searching look to see if he really were joking or not.

"I don't look timid, do I?" she asked quietly.

"Well, not exactly nervous," assented Blye, squinting at her vigorous form, which was still solidly preserving its youthful roundness of outline in spite of the evident years of hard work she had been through. Miss Moore's face was rather good-looking and her features, though dark, were not of the true negro type. She had a well-shaped nose and full lips, and her teeth were evidently white enough when she had the use of a tooth-brush. Her hair was jet, an inky, wavy black, but it had nothing of the kinky wool about it and was not to be compared to Bahama Bill's.

Blye was amused at her show of concern and having nothing better to do he kept his interest up to provoke her into more show of temper until Bill's trick at the wheel would give him a chance to go below and rest.

"No," said the stewardess, "I'm not nervous—at least not very, but I might have been if I had stayed in Brazil for a time," and she seemed to relapse into a more meditative state of mind not exactly in keeping with her former self.

"Cheer up," said Blye after a little. "It isn't likely that either your captain or Spears will have to do time on Noronha, unless they can't explain that money they had aboard the *Admiral*. Of course, little things like that are not exactly liked by Brazil, but it was not Brazilian money and foreign countries

are notably lenient with counterfeiters who pass stuff in other places."

"I wasn't thinking of the *Admiral* or her crew," said Miss Moore quite respectfully. "If you say so, now, I'll wake my little boy asleep on the boom—it's nearly eight bells and some one has to peel the potatoes for me—I simply can't do it in that little galley down below when we're switching and bucking like this—I hate little boats, anyhow——"

"Go ahead, wake him," said Blye, "but look out for his hand when he rolls over—he has a playful way of slamming the man who turns him out before the bells strike and he might not see who it is, you know."

Miss Moore crawled along the deck until she reached the sleeping diver. Then she gave him a hearty smack with the flat of her hand right over the eyes. The effect of this shock was immediate. The giant black fairly jumped off the boom and letting out a yell like a bull whale, swung wildly and strongly at his tormentor. But the lady drew back and stood looking at him with a smile, his huge fist just grazing her. Then he suddenly came to his full senses and stood glaring at her.

"What fo' yo' hit me, Miss Mo', what I dun?" stammered the giant.

"You ain't done nothing—that's why I turned you out, you mighty man," said the stewardess, regarding him with a critical eye. "It's eight bells an' you got some work to do below with me—there's some nice potatoes, an' a can of beans, an'—— Well, you just come along down into that galley. I'll show you what I want done—come."

"But I got to take the wheel at eight bells," protested Bahama Bill looking aft at Blye with a meaning look. "I cayn't go wid yo'—no, Miss Mo', I cayn't do no stunts below—it ain't jest exactly in my line——"

"You come with me—you'll learn something in a new line," said Miss Moore with decision. "Do you think I consider it a good thing for you to pull me out of a wreck and turn me over to be a slave—what? No, sir. You come with me and we'll peel those

potatoes all right—no foolishness—come."

Bahama Bill went along with her, looking sheepishly at Blye, who smiled and gazed into the binnacle. Soon sounds arose from below showing that the big diver was attending strictly to business, although his deep bass voice arose now and then in a loud tone of protest.

Left alone on deck, Captain Blye gave his attention to the little ship, now and then gazing at the land far away to the southward where the high mountains of Brazil rose above the sea. They were about twenty miles off the coast and less than a hundred from Pernambuco. It had been his intention to run in at that port and inform the agents of the wrecked schooner *Admiral* of the whereabouts of the survivors of the crew of that ship. He had enough money to defray any expenses of a libel likely to be served upon him.

Captain Gales and his mate Mr. Spears, together with the square-head Johnson and the lad Jack Wyatt, were safe enough upon the Rocas and would have food in plenty for a long time, but it was his duty, anyhow, to give the news at the first port where the telegraph could facilitate matters. Something might happen to either himself or Gales if the delay was prolonged until the run to Rio was accomplished and he felt it would bring adverse criticism upon him if it was found that he had run past a port where he had every opportunity of entering and clearing properly.

The salvage-money he had gotten from the *Admiral* would make it inexcusable for him to pass. He studied the situation over and over and wondered more than ever how the staid and sturdy old seaman Gales, master of a six-masted schooner, could have brought himself to carry bogus money. It was very strange, stranger when he thought of how he had been made the victim of the diver in Colon by the use of the identical counterfeits or money from the same plates.

He gazed out to the eastward where

the island of Noronha lay below the horizon a hundred and fifty miles distant and he pondered at the life of the strange colony of criminals banished to its ragged shores. He had seen the rock on former voyages and he had heard stories of the frightful discipline put upon the convicts confined there, the deadly monotony of their existence and hopelessness. Of the many thousands of men banished to it only two or three had ever escaped to the shore, the mainland of the South American continent.

The sun was high and the light showed strong upon the choppy swell that rolled monotonously, slatting the canvas with the roll and jerking things about uneasily. The heat was intense and the breeze light, growing lighter as the day wore on. It was time for Bahama Bill to take his trick at the wheel and he was about to call him away from the sacred duties of the galley when he saw a small black speck suddenly rise upon a swell almost dead ahead.

At first he thought it was the back of a black-fish, or small whale, many of which had appeared during the morning, but as he watched again he saw the thing rise upon the crest of a swell and remain motionless, without any wash or surge to show it was alive. Then it dropped from view again as the sea rose between and the sunshine showed only the deep blue of the tropic ocean.

Blye was interested. He headed the sloop for the black object and held her for the spot where he had last seen it. Again it rose upon the swell, this time remaining in view, for the vessel had neared it so that the swell could no longer hide it. He called Bahama Bill loudly and that individual lost no time in getting away from his fair companion in the galley. He came on deck with a rush holding a knife in one hand and a half-pared potato in the other.

"Something dead ahead that looks like a raft or capsized boat," said Blye.

Bill ran forward and peered into the sea over the bowsprit end. The thing was within a few fathoms and

he could see it plainly from the fore-castle.

"Man adrift," he bawled, and his loud voice brought Hacksaw Johnson tumbling up from below thinking some one had fallen overboard. Miss Moore appeared also and all hands crowded to see what the floating object would be.

"Let go the mainsheet—jib and stay-sail—let go all," yelled Blye, for the *Seagull* was close enough to the wind to let fly sheets in the light breeze and stop her headway without changing her course. She slowed down quickly as the canvas slatted lazily and her headway carried her slowly toward the object in the sea ahead, Blye bringing her just to windward of it so that it would drift along the lee rail where it could be scrutinized carefully. It struck the lee bow with a dull thump and glanced alongside while Bahama Bill and Johnson leaned over and tried to get hold of it. But it dragged them aft with the headway of the vessel and they finally had to let it go, not until they had seen that it was a raft made out of a bunch of small spars and boards upon which lay the figure of a man apparently long dead.

"Aft the mainsheet," yelled Blye and all tailed onto it while the *Seagull* luffed into the breeze and came to a standstill, hove to, about a hundred feet from it. The forestaysail was hauled to the mast to keep the vessel off the wind and the jib left slatting while Johnson and the diver got the small boat clear of the gripes and swung out over the side. They dropped her into the sea and rowed quickly to the raft, while Blye stayed at the wheel and listened to Miss Moore's exclamations of horror at the find.

Johnson made fast a line to the float and Bahama Bill with powerful strokes towed it slowly until Blye could catch a line. Then it was hauled carefully alongside, the big diver using a boat-hook to keep it from smashing into the yacht with the surge of the swell. Quickly they passed a line about the seeming corpse and hauled it on deck, more for identification than anything else, while Miss Moore urged them to

let the thing go adrift. The raft was cut adrift and the body of the man laid upon the deck to leeward while Blye slacked off the mainsheet and staysail in silence.

The find made all quiet and the presence of the dead had a depressing effect even upon the spirits of the big diver, who kept looking again and again at the face. The man appeared to be of middle age, and had closely cropped hair, a gray mustache, his features black with the sun-bake and his teeth showing white between blue lips. His clothing consisted of a shirt and white cotton breeches rolled to the knee, the shirt open at the neck, displaying the thin neck and emaciated shoulders of a tall, muscular man starved to death.

Bill finally raised the head and took hold of a hand to see if there was a ring or other mark for identification. He held it a little while, then suddenly dropped it.

"He's got a pulse—alive sho's shoot-in," said the diver, calling to Blye. Blye and Johnson rushed up and looked, felt the man's wrist and while the captain hurried to the wheel to keep the sloop on her course, Miss Moore ran below and reappeared with some spirits which Bill poured between the blue lips. Johnson rubbed the sun-burned temples gently until the peeling off of the skin made him desist. Then he worked the arms and waited until there was further sign of life. They carried the fellow below and Miss Moore lost no time making some broth from oatmeal. Then Bahama Bill took the wheel and relieved Blye and the sloop stood along for Pernambuco, edging in toward the land as night fell.

At four in the afternoon Blye announced that the castaway had recovered sufficiently to move and open his eyes, but could not talk on account of the awful burning of the sun upon his lips and tongue. As night fell the little Rio bats, small denizens of the tropic air, flitted about the ship and she lay almost becalmed under the land not five miles distant.

During the night the sloop rolled

sluggishly in the swell and made little way, her canvas slatting and her mainboom swinging and jerking until they had to put on an extra guy-rope. Once during the night Miss Moore came on deck and gazed at the shore. Blye, who was at the wheel, noticed her go forward and stand for some minutes near the hatchway as if listening for something. Then he heard her mutter some words, but he thought she was just finding fault with the weather and the tiresome roll. When the torrid sun rose she came on deck, and her face showed she had passed a disagreeable night.

Johnson and Bill sluiced the water along the decks and washed down before it was time for the morning coffee, and long before eight bells the lady had gotten a breakfast ready for all hands. Blye and Johnson sat at the table, leaving the diver on deck, and Miss Moore after placing the food sat with them.

"Well, how's the patient?" asked the captain. "Sort of hot weather for a man to brace up in, but we'll get along to the south'ard to-day if signs hold, for there promises to be a westerly wind off the land. This trade is certainly blowing light enough for anything."

"Yes, I've seen the trade-wind blow from almost anywhere at all along this coast up as high as this," said Johnson. "We ought to have a strong southeast wind a few degrees further south, anyway. The fellow we picked up is talking this morning—said something to Miss Moore here about eating—what?"

The stewardess blushed uneasily for some reason and busied herself with the plates. This amazed Blye, for Miss Moore was not the kind of woman given to blushes.

"Found out who he is?" asked Blye.

"No, sir, er, that is—well, he says he's from somewhere near the River Plata, but his ship foundered in a hurricane lately and he was adrift for weeks on that raft—starved and burned with thirst——"

"That shirt he wore looked extremely

like the kind they wear at Noronha," said Johnson, looking steadily at the woman. Miss Moore reached for the coffee-pot which stood jammed in a set of cleats and poured out a cup of the steaming fluid, turning her back partly while doing so. She made no comment to Hacksaw Johnson's remark, but Blye was keenly alive to the action.

"If he left the island he had a long pull of it on that float, poor devil, and if he was up for less than murder he surely has had his punishment all right—Lord what a time of it under this sun!—hasn't told you anything about himself yet except that, hey?" asked Blye.

"No, sir," said Miss Moore.

"Well, take care of him—we'll soon have him ashore where he'll be brought around all right."

"He don't want to go ashore, Captain Blye; he's a sailor and wants to ship with you in this vessel. He's not ungrateful for picking him up. He talks a little wild just now, but after you take the morning on deck and I get the work done below here, he'll be better able to talk to you. Of course, I understand his half-breed Spanish better than any one else, and you better leave him to me," said Miss Moore.

As this was really the case, for neither Blye nor Johnson understood Spanish very well, they waited until Miss Moore thought best to interview him. Besides, it was much better to have the lady take an interest in the castaway, much better than in Bahama Bill, for Bill had to work and Johnson was too saturnine and sour to attract any woman, black or white.

"I reckon we'll run as close as we kin," said Bill; "there sure ought to be some wind befo' night. This layin' off an' on fer ages within sight ob de po't wears a man, that's so—most wears as much as some women."

"We'll get her along before dark and make an entrance," said Blye. "Suppose you break out that balloon-jib—you and Johnson—get that on her and we'll drift in somehow."

They spent all the morning getting the huge sail bent, and as it was the

work of six men they had little time to think of the man whom they had picked up until the sun was setting behind the distant mountains of Brazil. The yacht had drifted along with the light airs, making some way in spite of the calm, the balloon lifting her a bit with each breath, for it was a mighty piece of muslin reaching from her truck to her bowsprit end and coming clear aft to the quarter. It caught everything the stouter cloth let through.

They ran in and anchored well off the land, for it was growing so dark that buoys could be seen with difficulty and neither Blye nor Johnson was familiar with Pernambuco. Then when the work was done and the decks cleared up for the night, they took occasion to get better acquainted with the new shipmate.

The fellow lay in his bunk and stared up at the deck-beams, his eyes glassy and the sunburned skin almost black upon his face. He was evidently a dark man naturally, a man with perhaps a tinge of negro blood like many of the Spanish-Americans of the coast. Miss Moore had been in the room and left quickly when Blye and Johnson stepped in to see.

"There's marks upon his wrists—looks like he's been tied up, or something," said Johnson. "I don't know the convict dress, but that shirt certainly looks like what I've heard tell—what you think?"

"If he's a Noronha convict he's sure had the cruise of his life," said Blye. "Any man who could stand drifting under this sun for two hundred miles on a raft was up against something pretty bad indeed—still there's no use judging the fellow like that. If he was shipwrecked he might have had to do a few things that would account for the shirt and wrist marks—still—"

"*Bien venido—bien venido*," whispered the man. "Glad to see you—speak up—I savvy almost anything—*yo tengo*—I have nothing but my skin left—see?" He rolled his eyes about and tried to raise his hand to point to his emaciated body, but the skin cracked with the movement and caused

him to whisper a series of curses in Spanish, English and other languages. "The lady tells me you are American—from the States."

"Yes, we are Yankees," said Blye, "but don't exert yourself any more—just give us the yarn straight as it goes—how did it happen?"

"Just plain hurricane, steamer *Rosario* from Buenos Ayres to Liverpool—every one lost except myself—I'm just a sailor-man and would like to ship with you—that's all."

"Well, you can do that easy enough," growled Johnson; "all you got to do is to stay where you are—we won't throw you overboard."

A smile flickered over the sunburned face for a second.

"I'm your man for anything," said the castaway.

"I'll get a doctor to look you over to-morrow," said Blye; "we've got to report a wreck on the *Rocas*—left some of their men there—"

"Please don't get me a doctor—I'm a Christian Scientist," said the fellow.

"But a medical man can fix up your burns quickly—don't be a fool," snapped Johnson.

"Well, wait until the next day—*mañana*—I want to be alone for a spell. The lady will do me much more good than a doctor. Put plenty of soda and grease on me and I'll turn to and work inside of a pair of days—give me drink of water now and let me rest up."

They did so, and he appeared to sleep. Blye stepped out followed by Johnson and the pair turned in without further ado. Bahama Bill was on deck for some time apparently held by the languishing eyes of the stewardess, who insisted that he was her hero and that she worshiped him. In the early morning Blye had Bill row him in and made his report to the consul.

"I suppose you know that reports about you and your ship have been sent me," said the consul.

"I should suppose so," said Blye, "but if there is a libel against her I have the money to settle and will explain in due time the cause for going to sea from Colon without clearing."

"Very well, I'll look into the matter," said the consul. "In the meantime you might as well make yourself at home and— By the way, what will you drink?"

"Nothing so early in the morning," said Blye.

The consul gazed at him astonished. Then he rang a bell and ordered a black woman to get him a gin cocktail.

"Looks like we'll have to square up here," said Blye after he had returned aboard, "and it's good we've the money to do so. Then we'll clear proper and run down the coast; there's a good job on with some of those old men-of-war in the harbor of Rio sunk during the revolution."

"Well," said Johnson, "the sooner we get out the better. I'd like to get to work soon and get some money ahead."

"A man can only do so much," said Blye judicially; "if he works overtime his production is of no value—and then it's just as well he didn't do anything at all. Effort without direction is of no value."

"Well, it don't strike me as a good thing to lay around here doing nothing," said Johnson. "I vote we get to sea without delay and make the run to Rio as quick as we can. This is a bad place to get tied up in even for a short time."

"Well, if you and Bahama Bill will put the mainsail on her we can stand out to-night just as soon as it is dark enough to make a getaway without attracting particular notice. Besides, it's too hot to do anything during daylight in these latitudes—except drink," said Blye turning in and resting in his bunk.

The diver helped the stewardess to get things shipshape in the galley and was occupied all day with that lady cleaning kettles, peeling potatoes and keeping the fire going under the beef-coppers. Miss Moore's voice could be heard distinctly at intervals addressing the big man and Johnson heard much of what was passing between them.

"You don't think I care for that little runt we picked up—do you?" she

asked him softly, her voice barely reaching through the bulkhead to the seaman's ears. "You know I owe my life to you—owe everything—I don't care about your Fighting Jule, your wife—I am as good as she any day, an' better, even if I am what you call a whitewashed nigger——"

"I didn't say I don't like yo'," came the deep bass of Bahama Bill; "yo' sure am a nice-lookin' gal, 'n' yo' kin set here 'n' tell me nice things erbout myself while I works fo' yo', but yo' see, I cayn't do nothin' mean——"

"I don' want you to do nothin' mean," protested Miss Moore; "is it mean to care a little for a girl who—well, who—adores a good man, say——"

The heat of the torrid day was too much for Johnson and he dozed off, not awakening until the fading light of the sun had told it was nearly six o'clock. Blye was turning out and came forth in white pajamas.

"I reckon we'll get the mainsail on her now," he said.

During the first night out they ran close to the land, just as close as the southeast trade-wind would allow. It backed off the hills when within a mile but a few miles distant they had the full force of it, and as it was well to the southward they stood off and on, making long hitches but good weather and considerable headway. The sun rose and found them still beating down the coast, a smooth blue sea and a sapphire sky, conditions to make things very comfortable aboard the small vessel.

The castaway now showed signs of returning vigor, but refused to get out of his bunk, declaring extreme weakness and prostration from the heat. Miss Moore fed him and then left him alone, devoting herself to her hero, the giant diver, somewhat to the amusement of Blye and Johnson, who regarded the black man as utterly helpless when pitted against the wiles of a good-looking woman. It was the one weakness of the race, the one few could overcome, and it made Blye smile to see the great sailor completely submissive

to the orders of the lady who had charge of the pots and pans below. Bahama Bill had always affected to scorn anything that savored of domestic labor, but here he was acting as galley-boy whenever he left the deck, instead of turning in and getting the needed rest.

They stood in the second day past Point das Torros, making a fine leg of it and then fetched out with a slant which carried them down past the Sulphur Bank. The seventh day they sighted Cape St. Thome and passed it the following morning with a howling breeze sending them on a close reach for Cape Frio. They ran past and for the entrance of Rio harbor, the finest harbor on the coast, making nearly a thousand miles dead away from their last starting-point.

Into the bay they ran and dropped anchor, all hands a bit tired from the short watches, for their castaway had not yet turned out in spite of his brave assertion when first interviewed. He remained in his bunk complaining of the heat, the food and above all the neglectful manner of the stewardess, who he thought might at least pay him some attention.

Miss Moore resented his insinuations and called him a good-for-nothing little shrimp, saying that she had already given too much attention to his affairs and in consequence had neglected her duty to the others. If he had further remarks to make he could wait until he was well enough to get about, when Bahama Bill would spank him for his rudeness. The giant diver grinned assent to this proposition and appeared to feel that he would like nothing better than the diversion. Miss Moore seemed to take it as a matter of course that her hero would attend to such affairs.

"I sho wouldn't hurt yo', lil' man," said Bill, "but I cayn't see what yo' lay in bed fo'. Dere ain't nothin' de matter wid yo', now, youse had good grub fer two weeks an' ain't dun no work, jest had de lady wait on yo'. Yaas, yo' had better be polite, don't hurt none at all, 'n' ef yo' ain't, yo'll sho git in trouble—see—savvy?"

The castaway looked up with hard, glinting eyes. His sun-baked face was now pasty from long greasy poultices and his emaciated form seemed to swell a little around the neck. But he said nothing. It was waste of words to reply.

"Well, I'll have to enter the ship before the harbor-boat or cutter comes along and makes it interesting," said Blye, "and I suppose it might as well be to-day as *mañana*. If our man don't brace up a bit we'll have to let him slide for himself. I'll report him aboard; anyhow."

The fellow seemed to take notice of Blye's remarks and watched the captain as he left the cabin and went on deck. Then he relapsed into his usual state of desuetude and appeared to rest pleasantly.

"You will have to row me in," said Blye to Johnson. "I'm afraid to leave the boat at the docks—this place is not too safe for strangers or their belongings. We can trust Bahama Bill to look out for things while we're gone. I'll try to get back as soon as possible, but it'll be after dark—no one does things here except after dark—too hot."

"You think it right to leave that money aboard?" asked Johnson.

"Well, it would mean that I'd get killed if any of these dagoes knew I brought it ashore," said Blye. "I don't want to carry it. It's fast in the little safe in the cabin and even Bahama Bill couldn't work that combination, although he is big enough to carry away safe and all. No, I trust Bahama Bill—and that other fellow isn't able to stand, let alone crack a safe."

They rowed in, Johnson pulling and Blye dressed in white duck looking trim and sailorly. He would have passed anywhere as a prosperous skipper coming ashore. He made his way up to the consul's office and waited for an hour until that sleepy individual woke up enough to attend to business, and in the meantime Johnson loitered in the shade of the steamship docks, where the cool of the evening had brought many loafers and men engaged in steving the many ships in the harbor.

On board the *Seagull*, the big diver found himself alone with the stewardess, who took occasion to remind him of certain obligations and as the shadows drew long across the hills she suggested that they take a row in the remaining small boat aboard. The big diver consented and they started off.

No sooner had the sound of rowlocks begun to die away than there was a sudden change in the look of the castaway lying in his bunk. He gazed fixedly at the port with eyes that glinted strangely—and his sunburned face wrinkled into a saturnine grin. He sat up with amazing vigor. Then started from the bunk with an agility that would have surprised the diver had he been looking on.

The furtive stranger made his way quickly and quietly into the captain's cabin where the tiny safe, not more than three hundred pounds in weight, lay seized to ring-bolts in the cabin floor. He tried the door, twisted the knob of the combination and listened for the click which would tell him he was right. He was wrong—the knob turned silently, nothing happened.

In the silence of the anchored ship he heard the clock ticking in the cabin, and the soft movement of the chronometer close at hand. The dull lapping of the tide upon her bends came to his ears and caused him to cast his head on one side like some listening animal, squinting and motionless. No, there was no one approaching and he slid away for the companion and peeped on deck. No one was aboard. He looked for the small boat and saw the diver and Miss Moore at a distance rowing slowly about and watching the shipping in the harbor.

The evening twilight was quickly passing into the tropical darkness and he went below. Soon Bahama Bill would come back to hang out the anchor light and at any rate he would not row far. He must work quickly if he wanted the money Blye had stowed in the small steel box. He must get it and be ready for a getaway the minute he could seize the small boat. He tried the combination again, hoping to

throw the tumblers into the proper position. He had secured what he thought was a combination from Blye's desk, but it was evident that he was mistaken, perhaps the figures were some calculations in navigation. Blye was careless about leaving his papers around.

The silence of the evening in the harbor made the smallest sound rise loud over the vessel. He would work and then listen, always with that furtive glance and head held sideways. A swell from the outside came rolling slowly and rocked the *Seagull* slightly. The fellow instantly sprang for his bunk with a snarl like a rat. Then noting the ensuing silence he crept back to his task.

He worked hurriedly, for he knew to be caught by the big diver meant death or worse. Back to Noronha at the very least and that was death, a living death. No, he had made his escape under the most terrible conditions and he would take no chances of failure. He must have money, would have it at any cost and he began to calculate the chances he would have with Blye's revolver against Bahama Bill. He figured that a couple of forty-five caliber bullets would stop him, would stop any one.

He soon found that to force the lock he would have to use either a sledge or explosive. He knew there was plenty of dynamite aboard, the stuff they used in wrecking, and he furtively searched for it in the forward part of the yacht. He found a box of sticks and taking one he came back to the safe and began to figure how he could get it into the crack of the door. With nitroglycerin he could have quickly made a dam at the bottom of the door and blown the fluid into the crack with a small pipe, forcing it in enough to blow the door, but with dynamite he had another proposition. He must drill the door.

Another ten minutes was lost getting into the tool-chest and fitting a drill. Then he worked rapidly, boring a hole just above the lock into which he could force enough powder and a mercury exploder easily to open the safe. He

drilled and sweated under the strain, and it would have been enlightening to his rescuers to have seen the amount of energy he developed.

The muscles of his lean frame stood out like cords and the blood swelling the veins under the baked skin made him a painful-looking object. But he was a powerful man. A man who was noted as the strongest and quickest of a very bad bunch of ruffians who had operated for some years in South American countries, and South America is the refuge, the Mecca, of the worst types of criminal. They flock there like flies to molasses.

The squeal of the bit biting the metal was the only sound that broke the stillness now save the panting breath of the castaway. A piece of fat rubbed on the steel point from time to time prevented it from getting soft under the pressure and motion, and it pierced into the steel door like a knife into cheese. Within half an hour the hole was ready and he filled it with the stick of powder, breaking the cartridge and poking the sawdustlike substance into the aperture with a stick.

He stuck one end of a fuse into the exploder, which was the usual kind of copper about the size of a slate-pencil, the mercury fulminate filling the lower half, a bit about as large as a pea, but of the most tremendous power. The fuse was the common, cheap, waterproof kind and he frayed back the end and struck a match—and was just about to touch the flame to it when he suddenly heard the regular clank of oars on oarlocks and the swish of a boat's stem cutting the water. In a moment the sound increased and the boat drew alongside.

Then the sound of Captain Blye's voice broke the silence and he asked Johnson some question. It was now nearly dark, and Blye wondered at not seeing the big diver on deck to meet him. He clambered aboard followed by Johnson and started down the companionway, when he was suddenly aware of a shadowy form, the form of a man he was not familiar with. The

man was staring right up at him and held his heavy revolver pointed at his head, lowering the barrel until it settled on line with Blye's stomach.

"Come in and don't make any fuss," said the fellow; "keep your hands up from your clothes until I get 'em fast with good line——"

"You—you, our—you?" was all Blye could blurt out, recognizing his man, the fellow he had saved.

"Don't talk, step down and let Johnson follow."

Johnson did before he realized what was taking place and the two of them now faced the castaway, who glinted at them with bright eyes over the ready gun.

"Recovered remarkably quick," said Blye; "where's Bahama Bill and the stewardess?"

"Gone loving—-but Nell's all right, she'll take care of him until I'm through—now don't let's waste any time, but you spin along that knob on the little box here. I want the stuff inside—quick."

Blye was a cool-headed man, a man who was used to difficulties and emergencies. He seldom met force directly with force, for he was a man of no extraordinary physical ability. He used his mental qualities against whatever contingencies arose. In the dim light of the dying day he studied the man who had turned upon him and a quick glance at the safe told him what had happened. Johnson, on the other hand, was a man who met emergencies with the usual quickness of the seaman, and met them in the usual manner, willing to pit his intelligence or brawn with equal readiness against all comers. The easy and assured manner of the fellow who pointed the gun made him hesitate about tackling, for it was certain death, and he was not a fool.

"Turn away at the knob," said the man decisively.

Blye stepped forward and pulled the fuse from the hole with one hand while he turned the knob with the other. The fellow roared out with fury.

"What you do that for, you dog—

I've a notion to bore you right now," and he raised the gun a little.

"Oh, that's all right," said Blye, "you don't have to blow up the safe to get in it; I'll open it fast enough." He was sparring for time and was studying what to do.

"Do it then," said the fellow, backing around so as to get both Johnson and the captain in front of the gun. "Jump, bear a hand and get the door open—two minutes and we'll shoot this thing out between us."

Blye saw that hesitation was useless. There was something so menacing, so sinister in the fellow that he forthwith rolled the combination over and back, playing for time, yet knowing that he must not take too long or he would surely be killed. Johnson stood by silently looking on, but although his hands were kept above his clothes, his fingers were set tight, clenched as though strained. Blye opened the door of the little safe and the man peered forward to see within. The money from the wreck of the *Admiral* was there, also the counterfeits, but the castaway ordered Blye to clean it all out and hand it over, which was done.

"And now," said the robber, "I'll take the small boat and go ashore. If either of you two men come on deck, you'll make excellent targets, for the sea is very smooth and quiet." He backed to the stairs and sprang on deck in a couple of jumps, leaving Johnson and his commander gazing after him.

They looked at each other.

"And we are grown men—full-sized men, too," said Johnson sadly; "what ailed us?"

Blye failed to answer, yet neither showed a desire to rush on deck after the man, who could now be heard clambering into the small boat. Not until the oars sounded in the water did either Blye or Johnson start for the deck, and then only to peer over the combings at the fellow. Blye dropped below again at once. He rushed to his bunk and pulled out a drawer at the bottom of which lay a small rifle such as is often used for target-practise. It was a light thing, and the tiny copper

cartridges in the box at hand were pitifully small. He grabbed the whole tiny outfit and started for the companion-stairs.

"Hurry," said Johnson, standing aside and giving him room.

The boat was now a good hundred yards off, and the darkness made its occupant indistinct, a mere blur, but Blye hurried not at all. He slipped a tiny cartridge into the chamber and rested the little barrel upon the combings of the companion. The quiet of the ship enabled him to get a good sight, just the tip of the white glint at the end of the barrel. Slowly he drew it full upon the middle of the blur. His hand shook a little and he hesitated.

"My God," he whispered, "we can't lose that money—it's our salvation, means all to us." Then he gathered himself again and held a steady hand.

The tiny "phwat" of the little rifle was answered by the whacking crack of the heavy revolver from the small boat and a bullet smacked into the wood within an inch of Blye's head, the splinters and dust blinding him a moment.

"I got him all right," said Blye calmly, handing the rifle to Johnson.

"Shoot again—shoot again—quick," cried Johnson.

"I got him—there's no use—can't see him now," said Blye and he went on deck. There was a roaring hail from the darkness astern, the voice of Bahama Bill calling, followed by the furious rowing of oars. In a few minutes the big diver came into view calling to know what had happened. In the stern of his boat sat the stewardess, gazing calmly at the distant spot where the other boat had now drifted from view.

"Quick, come alongside," yelled Blye and the next instant the three men, with the woman still in the boat, were rowing furiously toward the place where the castaway had disappeared. In a few minutes the empty boat was alongside.

"Overboard—what!" yelled Johnson.

"Must have started to swim in,"

commented Bill, who had just heard of the reason for the shooting.

"He was hit right in the center of the chest," said Blye decisively. "I know this little rifle. It isn't big enough to kill him right away, but he's got a hole right through the middle of him—even though it may be pretty small." The others were not convinced at all, despite the captain's assurance, for it was too dark to see anything clearly and an assertion of accuracy was taken to be but a demonstration of Blye's nervousness at the loss.

Some bubbles rose alongside the boat, a small cloud of them, and made a hissing as they broke.

Instantly Bahama Bill sprang up.

"Here goes, anyways," he said, and without further ado dropped gently headlong over the side, diving straight down and disappearing with hardly a splash. He was gone two full minutes and during that time the thoughts of the two men in the boat were most depressing. The whole cruise seemed to have proved fruitless after all, just because of this scoundrel they had rescued. Then there was a snort like that of a grampus and the diver was at the surface twenty feet distant.

"Row ober heah—cap—I dun got him," he said. Quickly swinging the boat about, Johnson had her alongside the diver in a moment. He was holding a man by the hair and swimming easily. Blye bent over and reached for the form, grabbed it, and the fingers of Bahama Bill clasped the gunwales.

The diver swung his foot over the side and rolled into the boat's bottom and then arose and helped Blye to pull the form of the fellow aboard.

"Hope he's got the money on him," hissed Johnson, holding the oars. The form of the man was laid in the boat's bottom and Blye struck a match, feeling his clothes. It was their castaway all right, and the flame showed a tiny red spot just beneath the breast-bone where the shirt had been opened. The next instant there was a scream, a piercing shriek. The diver and Blye, who were bending over the body, jerked them-

selves upright. Then the stewardess flung herself upon the form in the boat's bottom, sobbing, shrieking and calling to one Manuel to speak to her.

"Good Lord—what does it mean?" gasped Blye. Johnson sat stupidly at the oars. Then Bahama Bill coolly and deliberately took the woman in his mighty arms and held her, putting one hand firmly over her mouth.

"Yo' sure better row back abo'd, cap, befo' de whole harbor gets wise to dis heah business—dem two must hab been in de game togeder—knowed each other befo', an' I'm de damn fool—see, I'm de damn fool, not to know it from de start."

"Yes, get the money right—explanations afterward," said Johnson, rowing rapidly for the yacht.

CURIOSITIES IN SPORTING PHRASES

TO the layman the vocabulary of the sportsman who prides himself upon his skill with the gun is as puzzling as the jargon of a couple of excited Chinamen. In referring to the various lodgings of animals, for instance, the sportsman says that a hart "harbors," a buck "lodges," a roe "beds," a hare "seats" or "forms," a fox "kennels," a marten "trees," an otter "watches," a badger "earths," and a boar "couches."

In regard to birds, the sportsman's dictionary contains an even more curious and greater variety of phrases. He speaks of a "brace," a "leash," or a "pack" of grouse; a "brace," "a brace and a half," or a "covey" of partridges; a "brace," a "leash," a "nid," an "eye," or a "nye" of pheasants, a "bevy" of quails, a "wisp" or a "walk" of snipe, a "flight" or a "fall" of woodcock, a "flock" or "badelynge" of wild duck, a "gaggle" of geese, a "wing" or a "congregation" of plover, and a "flock" of bustards.



WHY CATS ALIGHT ON THEIR FEET

A N ingenious model has been constructed by Mr. C. Hartmann to show why a cat in falling always alights on its feet. The imitation cat consists of a cardboard cylinder with four rods stuck in it for legs, and a tail devised on similar principles; and the object of Mr. Hartmann's experiment is to show that a cat's faculty of falling on its feet depends on the rotation of its tail with sufficient vehemence.

Some interesting information on this antique problem is given by Mr. R. I. Pocock, a superintendent of zoological gardens, who has made several experiments. The faculty of always falling on the feet is one which is especially developed, said Mr. Pocock, by climbing and leaping animals, in which category are included all the cat tribe, monkeys, squirrels, rats, and most lemurs. The instinct is born in them, and the act of twisting is performed without any conscious effort on the part of the animal.

Mr. Pocock is also, like Mr. Hartmann, of the opinion that the tail plays an important part in the turning process. "All tree-inhabiting monkeys have long tails," he said, "and there is not the slightest doubt that the tail is of the greatest possible advantage to all climbers in helping them to turn. It also acts as a good balancer. You may see a squirrel walk along a tightly stretched wire or string, swinging its tail from side to side, just as a tight-rope walker balances his pole. Some years ago I had some rats whose tails had been cut off, and they were not anything like such good climbers as ordinary rats. And it is just the same with monkeys; those which have not long tails are not so good at climbing, and cannot leap to the same extent. It is noticeable that monkeys which have given up climbing trees have lost their tails."

The Wild Man of Jersey

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "J. Archibald McKackney: Collector of Whiskers," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Regularly every autumn the country newspapers in Southern New Jersey report one or more wild men roaming in "the terrorized vicinity." The city editor of a Philadelphia newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, thinking there is good material here for a Sunday "special," sends a green reporter, one McNeal, to the locality where a wild man has been reported seen, with instructions to track him to his lair, and find out all about him. McNeal arrives at Birchtown, and puts up at the tavern of one Hooper. A party of farmers are taking supper there, after an unsuccessful hunt for the wild man. Oswald Perkins, the Birchtown correspondent of the *Chronicle*, talks so hostilely that McNeal resolves to keep his identity a secret. The next day he invades Long Swamp in his quest for the wild man, and, having suffered considerably at the hands of briers and mud, is seen by a party of farmers, and is taken for the wild man and pursued by them. He comes out of the swamp near a schoolhouse where one Miss Hilda Kent is the teacher. McNeal becomes infatuated with her, and is engaged in conversation with her when Perkins comes on the scene. Perkins places McNeal under arrest, and he is confined in the Birchtown jail, the only other occupant of which is a negro named George Alexander Brown. Mr. Hooper intoxicates the jail-keeper, and releases the two prisoners. The negro says there is a genuine wild man in the vicinity, with whom he is well acquainted, and promises to take McNeal to his haunts. McNeal and the negro, Brown, penetrate to the haunts of "the wild man of Jersey," in the swamp. McNeal photographs the wild man, and succeeds in striking up quite a friendship with him. In accordance with a prearranged scheme, the wild man approaches the schoolhouse where Miss Hilda Kent is teaching, and leaps out of a tree onto the shoulders of Mr. Oswald Perkins, who is "sparking" her. After Perkins' ignominious flight, McNeal chases the wild man away, and appears in the rôle of hero to the eyes of Miss Kent. At the request of the wild man McNeal interviews the Governor of New Jersey at Atlantic City with a view to getting some game-laws passed limiting wild-man hunting to one month of the year. The Governor is enthusiastically agreeable, and McNeal returns to Long Swamp to write his "special story" for the *Chronicle*. The "copy" falls into the hands of Oswald Perkins, but is recovered by Henry Hooper and sent to the newspaper. McNeal discovers that Hilda's father is a spider-farmer, unalterably opposed to the reporter's attentions to his daughter. At McNeal's request the wild man comes to secure the spider-farmer into submission. But Jabez himself is humiliatingly trapped in the building where the spiders are colonized. J. Archibald McKackney, collector of whiskers, arrives on the scene, interested in the wild man's extraordinary growth of hair. He and McNeal rescue Jabez from the spiders.

CHAPTER XVII.

BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.



WHEN he heard the spider-farmer returning with help the wild man had acute stage-fright. His proud spirit had been broken. The iron had seared his soul. He did not even think of flight, but stealing back into the gloom he turned a pathetic gaze toward the militant figure of J. Archibald McKackney as if dumbly beseeching to

be saved from a fate worse than death. Billy McNeal and Hilda also drifted beyond the circle of lantern-light, thinking discretion the better part. They too could not help relying upon the indomitable McKackney, who seemed to have taken full charge of the situation. He advanced with unshaken tread to meet the spider-farmer and his companions.

"I was lucky enough to meet these neighbors of mine on their way home from town," shouted Bartholomew Kent. "Come ahead, boys. He won't have much fight in him by this time."

But J. Archibald McKackney

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This story began in the May issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents each.

blocked their path, and there was confidence in his bearing.

"Pardon me, sir," said he, "the wild man has been released from your den of spiders and is paroled in my custody. I am his protector as matters stand, and I cannot allow him to go to jail. If you will be good enough to listen to——"

Mr. Kent snatched the lantern from this surprising stranger's fist, swung it near his face and stared in silence. Then stepping around the interloper as if to look him over in detail, he fiercely demanded:

"Do you mean to tell me that you have turned him loose? What right have you to meddle in my affairs, sir? A wild man is it? So you are as glib with the title as the rest of them. You are liable to find yourself in jail. Where is my wild man? What have you done with him?"

Mr. McKackney gently grasped him by the arm and led him away from the curious neighbors. The spider-farmer was bewildered by this calm insolence and suffered the stranger to tell him in lowered tones:

"This matter can be settled between you and me without the slightest ill-will, my dear sir. I am personally interested in this particular wild man. He is a protégé of mine. If you will send these gallant neighbors of yours on their way, I will reimburse you for whatever damage has been done your spider business by the wild man's unfortunate playfulness. I will take your word for the amount and the check will be placed in your hands before I leave your farm to-night."

Bartholomew Kent was at a total loss to explain the presence of this person, but he could not help liking the way he talked. Suspicion fought with desire to mend his shattered fortunes, and he was in a wavering mood.

"I don't know you from Adam," he moodily replied. "This wild man business seems to be most infernally complicated. But I am willing to talk it over with you. Every dollar I could spare was invested in those imported spiders."

He turned to his waiting neighbors and addressed them:

"There has been some misunderstanding here. The wild man has been let out, and we couldn't catch him in the dark if we wanted to. Thank you with all my heart, and I am sorry to have given you this trouble for nothing."

With this he asked Mr. McKackney to step into the library. Hidden in darkness, Hilda and Billy McNeal had been listening intently to the passage at arms. When her father raised the lantern to illuminate the footpath to the house, a yellow beam flickered athwart the daughter's face. She uttered a little cry of alarm and McNeal swore under his breath. Hand in hand they stood revealed as the angry parent swooped down at them. He was not far from apoplexy. With shaking voice he ordered the girl into the house. Then he flourished his fist under the nose of the young man in the case and stormed:

"The reporter, is it? The hero I ordered off my place! The brave fellow who was stampeded by spiders! Are you still hanging around my daughter? You young nuisance, what in God's name are *you* doing here to-night? Another personal friend of the wild man? Is this a plot to drive me mad?"

He wheeled upon J. Archibald McKackney and demanded with a snort:

"Are you behind all this stark, staring nonsense? What have I ever done to you? No, I will not accept your preposterous offer. It is all a trick of some kind. Alive or dead, your wild man goes to jail. What have you done with him?"

A dim form moved swiftly from the rear of the yard and slipped behind the nearest barn. The wild man was making ready for flight. His spectral retreat could not escape Mr. McKackney's vigilant eye, however, and he raised his voice so as to carry an assuring message to the trembling fugitive:

"Mr. Spider-Farmer, I am not ac-

customed to have my word doubted. I can buy a hundred of your beggarly farms. You are a foolish man if you let your passion blind your judgment. The wild man has already eluded you, but I am ready to square his accounts. As for this estimable young friend of mine, Mr. McNeal, I have nothing whatever to do with his love-affairs. One thing at a time, if you please. Do you want my check? Yes or no? How much were your spiders worth?"

The spider-farmer's nerves had not yet rallied from the shock of the afternoon. He was in no trim to combat this masterful man, but he fired another shot before surrendering:

"What use have you for a wild man? Is he your long-lost brother? Why have you rushed to his rescue? The situation is absolutely incredible. You must realize that yourself."

"I want him for his whiskers," snapped Mr. McKackney as if this ended the matter.

"Oh, Lord, they are all raving crazy except me," moaned the spider-farmer. "Let us get our business over with as soon as possible. Please come with me."

"You are a nice one to call sane men lunatics," was the severe reply. "A spider-farmer addressing a rational and matter-of-fact collector of whiskers in this fashion! Why, man, you are most delightfully queer yourself. I like queer people who do queer things in their own queer way and tell the world to go to the devil. You and I will get on well together, you mark my word. Why, bless my soul, I am willing to have you slap on punitive damages when we come to writing a check. I imagine you must feel about those spiders as I do about my whisker collections. Have a cigar?"

The morose spider-farmer could not hold out against such blandishments. He passed into the library arm in arm with Mr. McKackney, and at once set a decanter and glasses on the table. It soon turned out that the one had hunted rare species of spiders in the same queer corners of the world in which the other had sought barbaric fashions

of wearing whiskers. One collector found himself telling a story of his hobby and the other collector was moved to tell a story to match it. Suspicion could not live long in such an atmosphere as this. When Mr. McKackney amiably suggested that his check-book be brought into play, the spider-farmer showed himself an honest man and would take not a penny more than the actual damages suffered from the ravages of the wild man.

"And now that I've bought and paid for him," said Mr. McKackney, as he pocketed his check-book, "I want to look him over. With your permission I will try to lure him in here, Mr. Kent."

Mr. Kent was ruffled. He tried to be courteous but he could not help saying:

"I abominate the sight of him, but you are my guest, sir. And I will confess that I am very curious to get at the bottom of his hostility toward me. It has to do with matters which perhaps we'd better not discuss."

"He is as good-hearted a creature as ever lived," affirmed Mr. McKackney. "Not an ounce of viciousness in him. We'll try to make him tell us how it happened."

He bolted into the yard and almost bumped into Billy McNeal, who was hovering near the side of the house.

"She's sitting by an up-stairs window," whispered the melancholy youth. "She doesn't dare to come out, and we can't hear each other very well, and it's almost too dark to make signs. But it's mighty comforting to know that she's looking down at me."

While Mr. McKackney was sympathetic, he had other fish to fry.

"Too bad, my boy. But it will come out all right. Please go and fetch me the wild man. He won't come for me. Tell him that I have saved him from a horrible fate, and that he won't be molested. As a small favor in return, I would like a few words with him in the house."

"I am afraid it is dead against his principles to camp under a roof," said McNeal dubiously. "Can't you meet

him in the swamp to-morrow? Besides, he's gun-shy of the spider-farmer."

"No, I am too devilish impatient to see his whiskers by lamplight, McNeal. If he has any sense of gratitude he will come on the run."

"Oh, he's chuck-full of gratitude, Mr. McKackney. That's what got him into this beastly scrape. All right, sir, I'll try to toll him in."

McNeal disappeared behind a corner of the barn while Mr. McKackney chuckled:

"A unique experience, upon my word. I shall have to do something for this young man and his pretty Dulcinea."

Presently McNeal returned with the message:

"He will be along directly, sir. He is still combing spiders out of his whiskers, and they make him fretty and unreasonable. But he is tremendously grateful to you."

When the wild man came slowly out of the gloom Mr. McKackney called out in soothing accents:

"Don't be skittish, old fellow. You are among friends. The spider-farmer has forgiven you."

With sidling gait and nervous starts the chastened scourge of the swamps advanced into the path of light which streamed from the library door. His bronzed hide was smeared with blood, mud and cobwebs, and the tattered cloak of skins and rags had been torn to shreds. But the untamed beard swept to his shins in a frowsy torrent and Mr. McKackney exclaimed with emotion:

"What a specimen! And apparently undamaged! Fancy a full-length portrait of him in oils."

"Have I the honor of addressing my preserver?" spoke the wild man in sad, deep tones. "My thanks are beyond words. Do with me as you like so long as I have my liberty."

"Won't you be good enough to come into the house, then, and talk things over?" cried Mr. McKackney. "I realize that you may have scruples against entering a habitation of ordinary hu-

man beings, but it will be doing me a great kindness indeed."

In silence the wild man meekly followed after, and beyond springing upon a table and growling at sight of the spider-farmer, he showed humble anxiety to obey the wishes of his friends. He looked anxiously around for McNeal but that old comrade of his had gone back to his station under the window of his beloved. Refusing a proffered chair, the wild man sat himself down cross-legged on the floor and murmured as if to explain his docility:

"You cannot enter into my feelings, gentlemen, but a mortal blow has been dealt my career. To be caught in a trap like a woodchuck was to suffer a most dreadful humiliation. I can never be myself again. But I bear no malice."

The spider-farmer was still smarting at thought of his own humiliation, however, and he could not help asking his sad-eyed guest:

"Why did you appear in this valley, and why did you single me out for your eccentric attentions?"

"It was at the call of friendship that I left my native wilds," pensively sighed the other. "And it was friendship that prompted me to chase you home."

"It's that unspeakable reporter," snorted the other, his wrath blazing afresh. "Misguided creature, you are in league with him by your own confession. But you have made me only more hostile toward him. I am more determined than ever to keep my daughter away from him."

"Tut, tut, gentlemen, a truce has been declared. This topic must be shelved until you have cooled down," protested Mr. McKackney, hitching his chair nearer the prize beard. He took the student-lamp from the table and proceeded to survey the wild man from top to toe.

"Come over here, Mr. Kent. I wish you to observe the callous ridges on his elbows and knees. Most singular!" said he.

Mr. Kent obeyed reluctantly and

presently the strong light was shining both in his face and upon the hairy countenance of the wild man. They stared hard at each other. And the longer they stared the more intent both became. In fact, Mr. McKackney noticed this absorbed tableau and looked first at one, then at the other, wondering what it was all about. The silence was painful, the suspense trying. The wild man was blinking as if not used to lamplight, and his vision may have been handicapped. At any rate, the doubt and amazement reflected in both countenances first gave way to recognition in the spider-farmer's choking ejaculation:

"Your name before you turned wild! Tell me, quick."

"Jabez Habakkuk Botts was the name they cursed me with," tremulously replied the other.

"Jabez Habakkuk Botts!" shouted the spider-farmer. "Don't you know me, you poor old fool? I'm your half-brother Bartholomew."

"It is my half-brother, Bartholomew Kent! I know you!" shrieked the wild man and with that he made a flying leap for the door, bowled Mr. McKackney over, and was gone into the night, leaving in his wake a string of affrighted cries.

"Just as if he had flown off in a cloud of brimstone," sputtered Mr. McKackney from under the table. "He didn't seem glad to see you, sir. What in the—what in the—whew-w-w-w, did it really happen?"

From afar they heard the lamentations of Jabez Habakkuk Botts sound fainter and fainter as he bored a streak through the night, touching only the highest places.

"Yes, he was here, and he went away. The crazy old fool!" gasped Bartholomew Kent. "And nothing slower than a bullet will overhaul him. Well, I think we had better have a drink, don't you?"

"But I have lost my wild man, whiskers and all," bitterly cried Mr. McKackney. "What did you ever do to him? Your *half-brother*! Well, of all the—of all the—yes, I'll take that drink

at once. About four fingers neat, if you please."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MUTINY.

At the sound of the commotion in the library Billy McNeal had promptly deserted his post beneath his sweetheart's window. He tip-toed near enough to hear the long-lost brothers hail each other and then dodged barely in time to escape being run over by the human thunderbolt, Jabez Habakkuk Botts. The glimpse of him was like the wink of a camera shutter. As the wild man hurtled into the darkness the reporter ran after, shouting his name, but gave up the futile chase after tumbling over a horse-trough.

"He is certainly going some this time. Now we *are* all in a stew again," he moaned. "And everything looked so lovely."

"Oh, Billy," cautiously called the damsel from her tower. "Are you hurt? No? Thank goodness! What did they do to the wild man? Can't you get him back?"

"Not at the rate he was traveling, dearest. He'll be passing through Jersey City by daylight if his wind holds out. But I'll try to find out what jolted him off his perch. Here goes little Daniel right into the den of lions."

The two gentlemen in the library had braced themselves with a stiff drink apiece and were heading for the porch to get fresh air when McNeal stepped up to them and stoutly demanded:

"Mr. McKackney, what's the matter with my friend from Long Swamp? There's been some kind of an outrage. When he popped out just now he was clean daffy."

Bartholomew Kent raised his arms and wagged his hands as if to ward off spooks. He spoke with more grief than anger.

"The reporter again! You bob up like an imp through a trap-door. Why don't you take after your wild man, and I'll be rid of you both?"

"See here, Mr. Kent," said McNeal. "Matters have gone about far enough. You've thrown a panic into Mr. Botts and Mr. McKackney loses his money. And I feel responsible for the bargain. I propose to know."

"This is no time for private feuds, gentlemen," put in Mr. McKackney. "McNeal is right in his contention and he deserves courteous treatment. And I have a right to demand an explanation, Mr. Kent. This young man will return to the library with us."

"But it has become a family affair," said Mr. Kent. "This Jabez Habakkuk Botts belongs to me by ties of blood."

"And am I not a family affair?" this from McNeal. "Great Scott, you ought to think so by this time. I insist that Hilda be asked down-stairs. It looks to me as if we were due for a show-down all round."

Bartholomew Kent was no longer violent. The day's doings had crumpled him body and mind. He made no retort to these impertinences. Hilda must have been within earshot, for she whisked into the hall and took her parent by the hand.

"Come into the library and sit down, father," she cried. "You look pale and tired. There has been a good deal going on, hasn't there?"

"Your uncle Jabez was too much for me," he sighed. "My brain seems benumbed. I fancy I feel as he did earlier in the evening."

This was so unlike the father she had always known that Hilda kissed him and saw to it that he was given the most comfortable chair. Then she seated herself on a divan beside her Billy in open mutiny.

As was expected of him by all present, J. Archibald McKackney opened the proceedings with a few well-chosen remarks.

"It seems to me that Mr. Kent owes a full explanation," he began, pacing the room with his hands beneath his coat-tails. "Why did his half-brother flee from him as if he had seen Old Nick himself? I have a cash stake at issue, but let that be forgotten. I am crying for justice. At some time

in the past you have wronged Jabez Habakkuk Botts, sir. When and how I do not know. But I read it in his—in his unceremonious departure."

"I never knew I had an Uncle Jabez. It is a very sudden blow," murmured Hilda.

"His looks are a bit against him, but his heart is pure gold," whispered Billy. "I won't shy at him as an uncle-by-marriage."

The spider-farmer scratched his head, stroked his stubborn chin and was evidently trying to pull his wits together. He did not look happy over the discovery of his long-lost kinsman. But he was cornered and he could not hope to retain Mr. McKackney's welcome check unless he told some kind of a story. At length he burst out as if the words hurt him:

"There is nothing for me to be ashamed of, except having to acknowledge such a totally scandalous half-brother as Jabez has always been. Why, I almost believe I would rather have had him turn up as a reporter. I have not seen hide nor hair of him for fifteen years. He was always an original thinker. It ran in the family. He and I never agreed about anything. He insisted upon turning hermit and getting back to nature's heart, as he called it. I kept track of him for some time after he began to live a solitary life."

"To cut it short, he had a fortune of more than a hundred thousand dollars left him by his father, Herkimer Botts, my mother's first husband. Jabez left his money behind him when he fled and scorned to have anything more to do with it. But he had hidden it away or locked it up, and there it was idle and useless. Moved by my duty as a brother, I tried to have a lunacy commission appointed to take care of him and to give me the care of his estate. But we could not find him, and I thought he was dead long ago. And his fortune vanished with him, as I have told you."

"A spider-farmer is competent to take charge of the affairs of another lunatic, I presume," frowned Mr. McKackney. "So this half-brother of

yours took it for granted to-night that you would try to kidnap him and get your hands on his missing fortune. That is the natural surmise, Mr. Kent."

"He needs a keeper and I am his fitting guardian," was the reply. "Do you mean to stand there and tell me that he isn't as crazy as a March hare?"

"You and I are in a rather delicate position to judge of such matters," said Mr. McKackney, aiming an impressive forefinger at the bald head of Bartholomew Kent. "Um-m-m, there are narrow-minded persons who might consider our respective pursuits as—well—a bit flighty. Now, I have no sympathy with your view-point, none at all, sir. Jabez Habakkuk Botts had a right to do with his fortune as he pleased. He chose his career, an unusual one, perhaps, but certainly a most interesting one. He has followed it with conscientious ardor. As a wild man, he has distinguished himself by zeal, artistic fidelity, and popular success. I gather that *you* have made a failure of spider-farming, sir."

"I cannot hope to get fair play from you," snarled Mr. Kent. "You are a party to a conspiracy which was led by that reporter. You are likely to seek to put *me* in a lunatic asylum, between you."

"Not at all impossible, sir, if you persist in your absurd hostility toward my young friend, William McNeal. You ought to be grateful to your half-brother for bringing these two charming young people together."

"Grateful! Oh, yes, I'm weeping for joy," exclaimed Bartholomew Kent. "I wish I had had a pistol when I met the old fool this afternoon. But what does all this talk amount to? The damage is done. I can never again get hold of Jabez. He will hide from me, and as I refuse to be under the slightest obligation to your meddlesome self, I don't want to accept your check. Now will you take your reporter and go?"

"My dear Mr. Kent, the check is yours. I cannot hold you strictly to account because I have lost a wild man. It is the fortune of war. The

catastrophe could not have been foreseen. But I do entreat you to soften your heart toward these dear children. Just look at them, sitting there in fear and trembling, waiting for the paternal forgiveness. It is most affecting. Clasp them to your rugged bosom, Bartholomew Kent. You and I were once young. Ah, let your own heart recall when you were twenty-one!"

"Hilda, you go to bed. Are you going to sit there and see your father made any more ridiculous?" was the crushing rejoinder. "I will go with you. I have nothing more to say to these persons. Let them go back where they came from and find their confounded wild man. I disown him. I disown him."

Hilda clung to her wrathful William and rebellion was declared. "I'll not let her be treated this way," he shouted with her head nestled against his shoulder. "You are a cobwebby brute. No wonder the wild man was ashamed of you. I won't——"

But Mr. McKackney had stepped between them and Bartholomew Kent, his demeanor Napoleonic, his face beaming with benevolence.

"Restrain yourself, McNeal," he commanded. "The situation calls for tact, diplomacy, the iron hand in the velvet glove. And the hand you need is the hand of J. Archibald McKackney. Leave it to me. Even now I seem to hear the sound of wedding-bells. Let us say good-night, for we will come again. Mr. Kent, we will detain you no longer. Hilda, my dear girl, dry those eyes, and calm be thy slumbers. God bless you, my children."

William McNeal found himself being led by the arm out into the hall, across the porch and into the yard, Mr. McKackney towing him like a steamer that had picked up a derelict adrift.

"No more farewells, my boy," he cautioned. "Don't spoil a splendid exit. We have left him wondering what in the world we will do next, and your Dulcinea has been given new faith in the future. Find the buggy and let us go back to that wretched

tavern of ours. This affair is so delightfully snarled up that I propose to give it my undivided attention."

CHAPTER XIX.

TERMS OF SURRENDER.

In the morning after their visit to the spider farm Billy McNeal and J. Archibald McKackney were holding a council of war at their headquarters in Delaware Ferry. After a calm night's sleep the collector was eager to be up and doing.

"I am greatly worried about the wild man," quoth he. "It seems to me that our first duty is to find him and bear him assurances that we will protect him against any wiles of that wicked fellow, Bartholomew Kent. We must not be selfish. Even the lovely Hilda should be set aside at the call of duty."

"Yes, it is up to us to get on the trail of Jabez at once," replied Billy. "We got him into this pickle between us, and he must be in a terrible state of mind. Poor old sport, he may have run himself to death by this time."

"Don't you think he will wait for you down the valley where you were to meet him last night?"

"Not on your life. He is too afraid of being put away in an asylum by that half-brother of his. And don't you see, Mr. McKackney, Jabez may suspect me of putting up a job on him from start to finish. Perhaps it has popped into that untamed noddle of his that I lured him up here to let Bartholomew Kent get his hands on him. Wild things are suspicious by nature, and I wouldn't have him doubt my friendship for worlds. No, he's digging out for Long Swamp, and he may not let me get within gun-shot of him even there."

"Then we will go to Birchtown," said Mr. McKackney. "When does the next train leave?"

"Oh, there's no great hurry. He'll be fagged out and need some sleep on the way. But we may as well start this afternoon. I'll go crazy waiting around here if I can't see Hilda."

Mr. McKackney offered him a cigar as if to show his sympathy. McNeal explored his pockets for matches and fished out an unopened letter.

"Why, this must be the one you gave me last night from Henry Hooper. I was too busy to think of it. He's a good friend of mine. Here's the latest gossip from Birchtown."

McNeal read the letter aloud while Mr. McKackney lent an attentive ear:

MY DEAR SIDE-PARTNER: I take the pen in hand to tell you that I am still retailing peach-brandy and other poisons at the same old prices. Business good, but the town dull since the wild man vamosed. Our nigger friend George has the big swamp all to himself and seems lonesome. He was in here yesterday and says to tell you that home don't seem the same since you flew the coop. He is out on bail but is considerable worried about his trial. Oswald Perkins is after his scalp and is going to do his darndest to have him sent up for a long term. I hate to see the nigger railroaded, for he ain't really ornery. He kind of expects you will drop in and save his bacon. But of course you can't make a business of playing the little tin-god to chronic chicken-thieves.

Oswald Perkins has turned awful sour. He tried to steal your newspaper article that you sent George out to mail. I give him the double-cross by switching an envelope full of waste paper on him and he's puzzling himself about it yet. So you're all square with him on the newspaper game, but he's been showing a yellow streak about the pretty school-teacher. There's been some foolish old women's talk about you and her, and they have kicked up such a rumpus that the school-board ain't over-anxious to get her back. Oswald is blowin' around as her champion, and says he will see that she gets justice. But on the quiet he has been doing some of the knocking. Do you catch on? He wants her to think he's her best friend, so as he can get solid with her. I've been tempted to knock his ugly head off, but maybe the job belongs to you. My regards to the genial party who takes this letter to you. He made a hit with me.

Your faithful side-partner,
HENRY HOOPER.

"More work for me," was Mr. McKackney's comment. "This chicken-thief is a winning character. I shall take up his case in its order. But this villain Oswald Perkins comes within your jurisdiction, McNeal."

"I can't get to Birchtown too soon," sputtered the other. "The beast! I can't bear to think of having Hilda go

back to school among those hayseeds. But we couldn't be married now, even if we do get the best of the spider-farmer."

"Leave it to me," said Mr. McKackney, with a very mysterious air. "As I told you, I am a professional god from the machine. I find myself more and more pleased with this desperate chaos of things."

"All right, so long as you leave Oswald Perkins to me, sir. I'll put the kibosh on *him*, as Henry Hooper calls it."

During their leisurely journey to Birchtown Mr. McKackney was a diverting companion. McNeal plucked up heart as he listened to the tragic tales of the Sentimental Anarchist with the Full-Blooming Aurora Whiskers, of the Adventures of the Hirsute Orchestra and the Downfall of the Red-Bearded King of Maaloo Island. There could be no doubt of the narrator's ability to win his way in the face of all besetments. After such experiences, handling a spider-farmer and a wild man seemed like child's play.

"But what made him wild, Uncle Jabez, I mean?" asked Mr. McKackney, breaking off right in the middle of a long story. "I was thinking of that when I went to sleep last night."

"You can search me, sir. There's a dark secret for you. It's buried in his bosom and also in a roll of bark in Long Swamp. He wouldn't let me use his real name in my story. And I didn't even tell it to you or Hilda. His explanations to me didn't go far enough. He's hiding something."

"Well, we won't pry into it unless he is willing, my boy. But I seem to hear the swish of petticoats in the background. That's what drives most of 'em wild. Look at yourself. You haven't known a sane moment since you first clapped eyes on your slip of a school-teacher."

"I'll be ripe for a padded cell if you don't get action soon," cordially agreed McNeal. Thus they whiled away the time until McNeal was once more in the familiar "main street" of Birchtown, hastening to greet his friend the

landlord. Henry Hooper was surprised and delighted, but he wasted no time in welcomes. Leading McNeal into a corner of the barroom, he confided:

"George, the nigger, left here no morn'n three minutes ago. He was all of a sweat and full of trouble. He begged me for a bottle of whisky, said it was for a sick man, and skedaddled. He'd just come out of the swamp, for he was mud up to his chin. Sounds to me as if the wild man was knocked out. I asked him who it was, but all he had time to say was, 'he sure does need a jolt o' rum.' Mebbe you'd better look into it."

McNeal hurried Mr. McKackney into the street and told him as they trotted toward the livery-stable:

"Jabez must have got back, and he's all in. How did he 'make it so soon? We'll try to overtake George."

Ten minutes later they were clattering over the turnpike. And before they had come in sight of Long Swamp, they saw the squat figure of George racking along at a weary shuffle as if he were ready to drop. The negro did not even look behind him until he was loudly hailed, jerked into the buggy by the collar, and landed in a heap on Mr. McKackney's broad lap.

"Has he come back? What's the matter? Is it the wild man?" queried McNeal. "Get your breath, quick."

"Is it sure 'nough you, boss? My, oh, my, is it you, hones' for a fac'? I was 'bout to bite th' dust. Drive on, for th' wild man is mighty distressful. He couldn't no morn'n wiggle his toes when I done left him."

"When did he get home? Where did you find him? Has he been hurt?" demanded the others in the same breath.

"I done found him on the aidge of th' swamp 'bout two hours ago," panted George. "He was in a mos' desperate fix, he sure was, plumb run off his feet, battin' his eyes, tryin' to crawl, an' fallin' all over hisself. His hair an' his whiskers was full o' cinders. This looked mighty curious to me, boss."

"I had to leave him in a thicket 'long-

side the pasture. He lay down, openin' and shuttin' his mouth like a fish. He was sure dead to the world. I fetched him water an' soused him good, an' he come to a little an' tole me he had hot-footed it without sleepin' a wink, bein' in such a hurry to git away from wherever he was comin' from that he hooked onto a freight-train for forty miles. His mind an' body is all wore to a frazzle, boss, an' he's jes' petered out. I seen that he needed a bottle of the old bug-juice an' I put out for Birchtown lickity-bim. An' here I is."

"Poor old chap," murmured Mr. McKackney. "You were right, McNeal. He was hunting his hole. I hope we are not too late. Can you take us to him, George?"

"Yes, indeed, it's easy walkin' that far. I don't know you, please, sir, but if my boss says it's all right, I'll lead you straight to him."

"Mr. McKackney is the wild man's friend, George," said McNeal. "He will set him on his feet if anybody can."

"You sure does dig up powerful friends, boss. I ain't forgot how you henry-hooperized me out o' th' calaboose."

They left the buggy at the pasture gate and ran toward the swamp at top speed, George waving the bottle on high. He led them to the thicket, parted the bushes and revealed to their sorrowing gaze the inanimate form of Jabez Habakkuk Botts.

"Has he done cashed in?" quavered George as he dug the cork from the bottle.

"No, he is alive," said McKackney, stooping over the pitiable figure. "Get a drink into him as soon as you can. He is in a stupor of exhaustion. Here, I'll hold up his head."

He propped Jabez against his knee and McNeal let the fiery liquor trickle between his teeth. The patient coughed, sputtered, groaned, and presently opened his eyes. Staring at the pitying faces of his friends, he sighed thrice, and then as if recollection stirred, he struggled to rise.

"Don't try to get away from us, old

man," entreated McNeal. "You are with those who love you and will protect you. We have come to tell you that the spider-farmer will never molest you again."

"You are under my wing, and J. Archibald McKackney was never defeated," came another consoling voice.

The wild man tried to speak. He could not doubt such friends as these. Their very accents rang true. He managed to say in a broken whisper:

"You—you have not told him—where—I live?"

"Of course not. We have no more use for him than you have," assured McNeal. "Just you hit the bottle again, and rest where you are for a while. We'll wait."

They withdrew to the pasture and George suggested:

"I don't reckon he's had time to put no food in his stummick. S'posin' we rummage around an' git him some fodder. I'll crack up some hick'ry nuts, while you-all dig flag-root 'an' there's apples in th' orchard t'other side of the pasture."

"Excellent idea," said McKackney. "He must be starving."

Food and drink worked wonders. An hour later the wild man was able to sit up and talk in a rational manner. He was too weak to try to enter the swamp, and Mr. McKackney said it was just as well. He could not undertake the journey unless they delayed to build him a corduroy road. It was he who did most of the talking to Jabez Habakkuk, and the upshot of a long interview was that daylight began to rift through the clouds. And McNeal admired this resourceful gentleman more devoutly than ever as he declared to the wild man:

"Now, you understand, Mr. Botts, that everything revolves around this young man and that lovely girl, your niece. Your half-brother, Bartholomew Kent, is a selfish, grasping dunderhead. He wants your fortune, he has wanted it for years. You want to be rid of him, once and for all. Your money means nothing to you. I do not venture to offer a solution, but I want you

to think things over in the light of our conversation."

Jabez Habakkuk Botts rumbled his trailing beard with both hands, pushed the hair out of his eyes and gazed long at the afternoon sky. McNeal sat on a stump wondering what was passing through the mind of this singular uncle of Hilda's. It seemed hours before the wild man addressed Mr. McKackney with a wan shadow of a smile:

"I had forgotten that men cared for money, it has been so long since I had any use for the accursed stuff. I begin to see my way. I have found a niece, a girl who seems to be attractive in every way, a girl whom I could learn to love. And she befriended me when—when I was trapped. And I have even more reason to be fond of my friend McNeal, a young man of proven loyalty and devotion to my interests. If money will help them to find their happiness, all I have is theirs. I had not thought of it. But about Bartholomew? I owe him nothing but ill-will. He has always been a pest."

"May I offer a word of advice?" exclaimed Mr. McKackney. "I admire your generous impulses. But as you say, we have not yet disposed of Bartholomew. I happen to know that he is badly in need of money, and that he is almost certain to lose his spider farm. If he does, he will be more bitter against you than ever. Why not divide your fortune if you are determined not to use it yourself? Give part of it to Bartholomew. Forty or fifty thousand dollars will set him on his feet in handsome shape and give him a living income. Settle a like amount on Hilda, if you wish to do something handsome for her. I have not pried into Mr. McNeal's personal affairs, but I assume that as a young reporter his income is not—er—is not large."

"Twenty a week and promise of a raise this winter," spoke up that youth, with a sunny smile. "I hadn't got as far as figuring how two people could live on it."

"I will most gladly do as you suggest," said Mr. Botts. "It seems to be a very happy solution of several prob-

lems. But, of course, it will be done upon condition that Bartholomew gives his consent to my niece's marriage, and promises to let me alone for all time."

"Certainly. That is the nubbin of the whole matter," agreed Mr. McKackney. "You understand me perfectly. Mark you, I am assuming that you will never need the money yourself."

"No, I have a store of gold coin buried for a rainy day," said the wild man. "It will supply my simple wants. My fortune, consisting of government bonds, is in a safety-deposit box in a New York bank. I wear the key on a thong around my neck. Shall I entrust the task of arranging these settlements to you, my dear sir?"

"I insist upon giving you ample references as to my social and financial standing," said Mr. McKackney.

"I have made a will which you will find in the strong-box," resumed Mr. Botts. "I had intended leaving my fortune to build and endow a modest retreat for aged and infirm wild men. But this will must be destroyed."

William McNeal grasped the horny hands of this benefactor and almost blubbered:

"You are a brick, Uncle Jabez. I wish you were tame. I hate to lose you. My, but I do thank you."

"Tame?" sighed the wild man. "I have indeed been tamed. I have no heart to resume my abode in Long Swamp. But my fate is a trifling matter, after all."

"Your destiny is a matter of vital importance to me," cried Mr. McKackney, with great vehemence. "Your unparalleled whiskers have not been off my mind for a minute. You and I have no more than begun our acquaintance. And unless I am greatly mistaken, you will find that I can serve you as a friend."

"I am too weary to discuss matters any further to-day," murmured Mr. Botts. "I thank you for your interest in me. If George and my young friend will help me journey to my home in the swamp I think I will rest undisturbed until to-morrow."

"I will go back to the hotel and wait for you, McNeal," consented Mr. McKackney. "Then we will clear up the odds and ends of our mission."

CHAPTER XX.

TAMED AT LAST.

Hilda Kent was reading a letter addressed to her father, which he had handed her with the feeling comment:

"You have beaten me between you. This man McKackney is invincible. I never saw his like. But the terms of surrender are most generous. I have been unfair to Jabez. Of course I can hold out no longer."

She was reading the glad tidings from J. Archibald McKackney with a heart that beat wildly for love and joy and bewilderment. Riches were promised her for her very own. Her father would no longer have to dread poverty. He would be a happy, contented spider-farmer. But what did these blessings amount to beside the shining fact that she would be free to marry Billy whenever—whenever he wanted her. But why had he not written her? Her face clouded. Ah, here was a postscript:

Tell your lovely daughter that her young man will be restored to her by to-morrow morning's train. A badly bruised set of knuckles has spoiled his penmanship for a few days. I suspect that a series of collisions with the chin of one Oswald Perkins may account for the damage. The Perkins optics are heavily draped in mourning. A prettier pair of black eyes I never saw in my life. Lest your daughter burst into tears, please inform her that the classic features of her young Apollo were not marred in the least.

"The dear, dear boy!" cried Hilda. "He doesn't like Oswald Perkins, I know. So he had to go and fight him! Isn't he a lion-tamer, father?"

"Umph, I didn't think so. But what about the real news in the letter? Do you mean to say you haven't taken it in?"

"I was talking about the real news," she exclaimed with sparkling eyes. "Billy is the only thing that really counts. Yes, isn't it wonderful about Uncle Jabez? Why, I won't have to

go back to school, will I? And can you get along without me?"

"I imagine that I shall have to," he replied with a reluctant smile. "I am not particularly fond of that young man, but I will confess that he has been altogether too much for me. I suppose I must let him come here to see you. By the way, the morning train must be in. I suppose McKackney will be coming along with him."

"I wish they'd bring Uncle Jabez, father. But I shouldn't think he'd care to visit us, after his recent experience. Oh, there's a carriage in the lane now," cried Hilda, as she ran to a window. "There are four men in it. And one of them is black. It must be that blessed old George Alexander Brown. But who is the stranger on the back seat?"

She was out of the dooryard and waiting at the end of the lane when the carriage halted and Billy tumbled out to greet her with an ecstatic whoop of: "Here we all are. Isn't this a corker of a reunion? Hilda, you blessed angel, *you*. Are you glad to see me?"

But her response was drowned in the shout of Mr. McKackney:

"Ho! Bartholomew Kent. Come out and shake hands with your brother."

Until now Hilda had been oblivious to all but her William, but this explosion made her look at the carriage again. Where was Uncle Jabez Habakkuk Botts? Could he be that patriarchal figure almost enveloped in a mackintosh and a slouch hat? His beard was tucked from view, and his flowing hair had been caught up under his sheltering hat, but a second glance told her that this was indeed the wild man, evidently disguised for a railroad journey. He jumped over the wheel with his old-time agility, and stood gazing at her from under the broad-brimmed hat as if waiting for her to greet him. Garmented as he was from head to heels, he had a dignity of bearing which pleased and impressed her. With an affectionate impulse Hilda flew at him, put her arms around his neck and kissed him on the tip of his sunburned nose.

"Have they really tamed you as soon as this?" she asked. "And what makes you so wonderfully good to me? I don't deserve it at all. Here comes father. He will be so glad to see you again."

Bartholomew Kent was also puzzled to recognize the tall person in the mackintosh and he advanced as if suspecting another plot.

"Is this really you, Jabez?" he inquired. "I owe you an apology for the past. You are a credit to the family. I know that I ought not to take your money, and I didn't mean to persecute you. I thought I was acting for the best. You were very loony, you must admit."

"Let bygones be bygones, Bartholomew," said his half-brother. "I have made great sacrifice of my feelings to come back here in these cursed trappings of civilization. But I wanted to shake your hand and wish you well. But mind you, I will haunt you through life and after if you do not give your daughter freely to this young man, and bestow your blessing on their union."

"They are at liberty to marry each other when and where they please, Jabez. I may have been pig-headed but I always stand by my word. My convictions have been altered. I accept your conditions upon my honor as a gentleman."

"Here, George, where are you?" spoke up Mr. McKackney. "You are a witness to all this, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir, Mister Who-crack-me, I'se a witness. I'se been a witness of all these yere proceedin's from th' day they begun. George Alexander Brown is a god-father-once-removed to these chilluns' sweetheartin'. It was me that found th' wild man for my boss, and it was me that found a uncle for Miss Hilda, and it was me that done fetched about this yere assemblage. You an' me is sure a hot pair to draw to, Mister Who-crack-me, ain't we now?"

Hilda and Billy had wandered into the lane as if "the subsequent proceedings interested them no more." George gazed after them with a god-fatherly smile that bisected his jetty counte-

nance until he was diverted by Mr. McKackney's voice:

"George, I am ready to take up your case. These gentlemen will be patient, I'm sure. But I want to set your mind at rest. I have just decided to take your destiny in charge. Another destiny more or less won't burden me. Mr. McNeal and Mr. Botts think a good deal of you, you worthless rascal. I am not going to let you go back to Birchtown."

"But Mister Henry Hooper has done dug up a hundred real dollars bail for me. I ain't goin' back on him no time."

"I will take care of that, George. Henry Hooper will not be out of pocket. Now tell me the truth, what were you in jail for?"

"Two skinny pullets an' a rooster so tough he splintered my teeths, Mister Who-crack-me. I hope to die if that ain't all."

"Will you promise to rob only my chicken-coops if I take you home to Massachusetts with me and let you live on my place?"

"How about my honey-looloo gal in Birchtown, suh?" asked George, with tears in his eyes.

"Send for her when you get settled and I'll give you a wedding that will make you weep for joy. Will you work when I want you to?"

"Till I drap, Mister Who-crack-me. Ain't I goin' back to the calaboose no more, no time? Hallelujah, amen! Boss, my boss, let us please blend our voices in that good ol' hymn of praise:

"Who built dat Ark?
Noah, Noah."

McNeal was within earshot and his pleasing tenor at once picked up the melodious camp-meeting chant, and the brace of erstwhile jailbirds clung long to the sweet and quavering chords. The impromptu effect of this performance enchanted Mr. McKackney, who demanded encore after encore and finally declared:

"And I have been entertaining night-ingales unawares! George, your voice is superb. You will sing for me under

my library windows on summer nights."

McNeal called out from the lane:

"George is coming to live with me when I—when we—get our home running. But we'll lend him to you for a while, Mr. McKackney."

"This all is too over-powerful for me," stammered George. "Of course I wants to be with my real boss if he wants me. But I ain't 'portant 'nough to be 'sputed 'bout. Listen to 'em, Mister Wild Man, squabblin' for me as if I was some account."

As if his feelings were too much for him, George ambled to the porch and slumped on a step. Mr. McKackney turned to Bartholomew Kent and said:

"The only destiny left on my hands is that of your kinsman and my friend, Jabez Habakkuk Botts. Inasmuch as you will be interested in my plans, let us three adjourn to the library. I have something to propose."

The wild man, if such he could now be called, followed his protector, the mackintosh flapping about his sandaled heels, the slouch hat pulled low on his brow. He seemed to have laid aside all the tricks of his trade, so to speak. When they were seated, Mr. McKackney began:

"I became involved in your affairs, Mr. Botts, as a matter of diversion. But I have come to be genuinely fond of you. And I admire you as one of nature's noblemen. As it appears to me, you no longer care to roam quite as wild and free as of yore. Perhaps you may even wish to return to the civilization of which you were once an honored member. Or do you plan to lead a somewhat less strenuous career as a wild man in future?"

"I have become unfitted for the old life in Long Swamp," replied Mr. Botts. "Recent events have made it distasteful, have robbed it of its zest. I am already tamed, as you have seen. But I do not intend to give it up entirely. I loathe the idea of being anything less worthy than a primitive man by profession."

"I have it, then," cried Mr. McKackney, with a convincing gesture. "My

New England estate includes a thousand acres of woodland. Why will you not use it as your preserve? You may roam its secluded boundaries at will, and I will be delighted to listen to your unearthly shrieks whenever you care to practise them. In the winter, if you care to enjoy the hospitality of my mansion, it is at your disposal. Don't give up your delightful wildness. I offer you a compromise. I will organize hunts when you wish excitement. And you will be free to come and go as you please. Don't refuse me, my dear sir. I want your company—and your whiskers—and your wildness. I live alone, and ordinary sane people bore me to distraction."

"Your warm-hearted invitation certainly attracts me," pondered Mr. J. H. Botts. "The younger wild men of Jersey are growing up to take my place. And they will be protected by the game-laws of their Commonwealth. I am sick and tired of Long Swamp, and the winters are trying. A thousand acres of woodland and all my own, and beyond the mosquito belt? Mr. McKackney, I am moved to accept with all my heart."

"And as you get along in years, you will grow tamer," said his delighted host. "We all do. And you will live in the woods less and less. And if in time you care to employ your intellect in some congenial occupation, there will be always work in my library. We shall get on famously together. What do you think of it, Mr. Bartholomew Kent?"

"You are a masterful man, Mr. McKackney. I am relieved to think that Jabez will be so safely disposed of. I could not undertake to plan for him myself. He is too queer for me, much as I appreciate his noble benefactions to my household."

"But what made you wild, Mr. Botts?" boldly ventured Mr. McKackney, as the council ended.

"The time has not yet come to reveal it," replied the other, with an air of such solemn finality that Mr. McKackney was abashed. Nor to this day has Jabez Habakkuk Botts seen fit to tell

his secret to a living soul. If any reader of this story be curious and enterprising enough to lead an exploring party into Long Swamp, perchance they may find the deserted clearing in which the wild man once dwelt. And by digging industriously there is a chance that a roll of pitch-coated bark may be unearthed. Written thereon with a charred stick will be found the answer to the question:

WHAT MADE HIM WILD?

Almost a year after J. Archibald McKackney had taken George and Jabez Habakkuk Botts home to his New England estate, I happened to meet Billy McNeal on Broadway. I dined with this volatile youth at the Yale Club, during which reunion he explained with much enjoyment:

"I'm just back from a little visit at Mr. McKackney's place. Hilda—I mean Mrs. McNeal, went with me. We had a bully time. She's gone on to spend Sunday with her father at the spider farm. I have to hustle back to Philadelphia to get to work. Dear old Jabez is in clover, getting fat and sassy, and leading a double life. He hears the call of the wild for two or three months at a time and takes to the woods just as fearsome as ever.

"He is making great plans for the hunt to be given for the governor of New Jersey next month. They transferred it to Mr. McKackney's wild man game-preserve.

"But when he is not running wild and practising all his old professional antics, Mr. J. H. Botts lives in the

McKackney mansion as a kind of confidential secretary and chum, patronizes a good tailor, and dresses for dinner. He is as charming and dignified a gentleman as you'd care to meet. But Mr. McKackney won't let him touch scissors to his whiskers. His portrait by Sargent hangs in the dining-room. It was done with all his war-paint on, and you can fairly hear him shriek.

"George? Oh, he is as chipper as ever. He is coming down to live with us in the spring, as soon as we get our new house built. He is going to run the furnace, cut the grass and buttle. He followed Hilda around for three days and kept telling her:

"If I hadn't a-been in jail with your husband, you wouldn't never have ketched him for your own."

"Spider-farming is on the mend, but I don't take much interest in it. Bartholomew Kent has mellowed up a whole lot and he's coming down to spend Christmas with us. Uncle Jabez and I were talking about old times yesterday. Then he just had to take to the woods for our benefit, and you ought to have seen him run up trees and streak through the woods on all fours. Of course we were properly scared, and he chased us all the way back to the house. Hilda really turned pale when he turned loose a batch of his prize yells. After Jabez got his wind back he grinned in his beard and said:

"*You two babes in the woods ought to be very glad that you met the Wild Man of Jersey when he was in his prime.*"

THE END.



LUCK IN MINES

THE romantic discovery of a silver-mine, while sinking a well for irrigation purposes, on land belonging to Mrs. Langtry, in Nevada, recalls some even more romantic stories of mining luck.

It was when capital and hope were alike exhausted that a last desperate stroke of the pick revealed the fabulous riches of the Big Bonanza silver-mine in 1873—a treasure-house which has since yielded ore valued at \$150,000,000.

The Flores mine of San Luis Potosi was struck by a poor priest, who bought an abandoned claim for an "old song," and took \$3,000,000 worth of silver out of it; and the accidental discovery of silver in the ashes of his camp-fire made a millionaire of a negro fiddler.

The Under Dog

By Philip Verrill Mighels

An exciting tale of the Mexican border. The fierce outlaw spirit is strong in the heart of Kate Gardner, and so is womanly sympathy. And both have a decided bearing on the result of a man-hunt



THE dawning of day found the tall, gaunt figure of Gardner on guard where the thicket encroached upon his hillside acres. He was modeled out against the eastern sky in a

pose of weariness, with his rifle in his hand, all his faculties bent alertly to catch the slightest sign or sound that the fugitive might make in attempting to escape.

The scene was as rugged as the man. Except for the dense growth of trees, scrub and manzanita, fully half a mile wide and perhaps a trifle longer, the mountains were almost barren. Rocks and sage-brush contended almost equally for foothold on the vast upheavals of raw material. Over beyond the ridge whereon he was standing, Gardner had his home, a ruin left from an old-time *hacienda* where the Mexican *casa grande* had sheltered a peaceful Mexican family. Off on the right the great ravine yawned, wide and tortuous. Below the eminence that Gardner occupied the ground sloped off rapidly, forming a flat, level shelf of small extent. It was sharply divided from the thicket of greenery by a wall of rock, rising sheer from the earth to a height of at least eight feet. And over the lip of this granite ledge hung masses of vines and creepers that in places almost trailed upon the earth.

That another day could have dawned on the man-hunt would have seemed incredible to Gardner and others of the posse on the previous afternoon. Fernandez, at sundown, had seemed an

easy prey, reported by one of the men to have fled in one last desperate effort to this limited patch of shrubbery. Nevertheless he was not yet found, for the patch was thick and Fernandez knew it as no one else, and to hunt him carelessly in such a place would be rash, to say the least.

Gardner was aroused to a fresh degree of sharpness by the sound of a distant shot, on the farther edge of the patch. Still in this semistartled state of being, he turned like an active animal at a slight sound just at the rear, his rifle instantly at shoulder, with its muzzle man-high as it swung.

Then a horrid sensation gripped him at his heart. His daughter Kate was in line with the sight, a tall, fine-looking, black-eyed girl, roughly dressed, a light serape on her shoulders, and bearing in her hands a large tin coffee-pot, steaming full of its brew, and a battered cup of the same material.

Gardner's gun came down heavily.

"You!" he said. "Don't you know you ought to whistle, or sumthin', when you're comin' in on me a time like this? I might a-plugged yeh!"

Kate came on indifferently. "You must be tired, watchin' all night," she said. "Brought you some coffee." She poured out a cup of the strong decoction, adding, "And you ain't got him yet?"

Gardner took the cup and drank, thirstily, gratefully, before replying.

"We'll git him all right," he answered, wiping his mouth on his sleeve. "The patch is surrounded. He can't git away."

Kate put the pot on a rock con-

veniently near. "Poor devil!" she commented, in her colorless utterance. "Maybe he stole them horses and maybe he didn't." She sat on a rock and gazed toward the thicket.

Her father answered without particular feeling.

"The horses was stole, wasn't they? And Fernandez took to the hills. You needn't waste no pity on him."

Kate looked at him, her eyes slightly narrowed. "S'posen it was you they was after—you or me? Fer three days they've been huntin' the man fer his life. He ain't had one minute's rest, and maybe no grub—and no friend. You can't even prove he stole the horses, and horses ain't worth much human sufferin' nohow."

"Look here," said her father, "I ain't no judge and jury in the case, but a man don't generally run away if he ain't done sumthin' to run fer."

Kate eyed him peculiarly. She said, "I reckon mebbe you're right."

He knew what she meant. He knew the remark was personally directed to himself. It held an indictment he thoroughly understood. He avoided her eyes.

"I heerd a shot, some time ago," he said. "We ought to round him up pretty sudden, now it's mornin'."

Kate stood up and stretched her strong, brown arms.

"Do you like the business?" she asked him. "You and half a dozen like you huntin' down one lone man?"

Gardner pretended to drain the cup of one last drop.

"What particular interest you got in this here greaser, anyhow?"

She answered, "I never seen him in my life. He's the under dog, that's all."

"It's always the under dog that works on your feelin's," said Gardner, "especial some renegade like Fernandez."

Kate turned on him with a rising warmth.

"Whose gal am I, dad, hey? Don't you ever think of that?"

Gardner responded in kind. "Ain't I done my best to be your father and

mother both? Ain't I petted you and spoiled you, all your life?"

Kate turned away and went to where the coffee-pot was standing.

"Yes, you've spoiled me—in your way, I guess," she admitted. "I ain't fit fer nuthin' but this livin' on the border—with outlaws fer friends, and outlaws fer company, till all I know is outlaw men—and outlaw feelin's."

"Fer God's sake, Kate——" started her father.

She interrupted him. "Oh, I ain't kickin' about your ways of bringin' me up. You done the best you could. Only don't fergit I've got to be just what I am." She paused for a moment, and added in her even manner, "Want another cup of coffee?"

Her father accepted it gladly, in silence. He had hardly more than put the cup to his lips, however, when a voice from far up over the rise, somewhere on the edge of the patch, broke in upon his hearing.

"Hey, Gardner! John Gardner! Come up here, quick!"

He gulped the coffee down in haste, dropped the cup and started up the slope. Kate stepped actively before him and laid her hand upon his rifle.

"No cold-blooded shootin', dad, remember that," she cautioned. "You never know who's goin' to be the under dog to-morrow."

Some apprehension which was never absent from his thoughts was on him now. He looked at Kate in a helpless sort of way.

"Them horses down the gulch wants water," he said. "I've got to leave 'em to you." He hastened over the brush-grown ridge and disappeared from sight.

Kate, left alone, stood for a moment watching his retreating figure. She came down the shelving declivity with a shrug of her shoulders, paused for a minute to listen to a distant shot and at length went slowly down the trail to the gulch, where three small broncos were tethered.

Shouts and three quick shots, above the place where Gardner had hurried,

told of the narrowing down of the posse pursuing a man.

Fernandez, with an almost animal cunning and knowledge of the greenery, had drawn three watchers to the place above with deliberate intent. The ruse had succeeded in the one important matter of removing John Gardner from his post. Kate had scarcely been gone five minutes when the shrubbery parted—and the fugitive appeared.

He was not alone. Beside him, reeling from weakness, faint, pale, hunted by sleepless fears, a pretty little figure was supported on his arm—a girl no more than seventeen, her clothing torn, her dark hair tangled and disheveled.

The man himself was hardly less desperate of aspect. A wan, pinched look made his handsome countenance painful. He was hatless, scratched and tattered. His eyes were blazing with a supernatural alertness. He was a famished-looking being, yet the fire that burned in his veins gave his bearing a certain sense of defiance that nothing could subdue.

The girl he supported was his sister. In a quick, fine rally of his strength he all but carried her down to the level of the space below the wall.

"Somewhere near here, it used to be," he said. "You must remember—in the old days—the cave we found somewhere in the rocks."

His sister all but collapsed, as he let her sink down upon the earth.

"I can go no farther," she said. "Save yourself, José. Leave me—and go."

He was looking eagerly about. "No, I can't—just yet. I have fled because you begged me so. We've made a great mistake. They believe me guilty. They'll shoot me down on sight. I can only hope to save you from their madness now." He was over against the wall, feeling of the drapery of vines.

"By the love of our mother," said the girl, weakly, "I beg you to go!"

"The cave! The cave at last!" he answered excitedly, his hands lifting great heavy masses of the tangled growth, behind which a dark, irregular hole was broken in the ledge, and

dropping the natural curtain immediately, he hastened to his sister's side, helping her again upon her feet.

"You must hide!" he added, more quietly. "If they find you—tell them you were hiding from me."

"José!" she said helplessly, as he almost dragged her to the place, "I can't!"

"It's the only way you'll ever escape them to return to mother," he answered her quietly. "If you are found, tell no one of your relationship to me. If we meet no more—*à Dios!*"

"José!" she repeated helplessly.

"Come, come, be brave," he said. "We can say good-by but once. What's that?" He had turned at the sound of a shot. "Be quick, Papinta. You can even sleep in the cave."

He was holding aside the drapery of vines and supporting his sister on his arm. She was ready to faint with dread of such a parting.

"But, José, hide here with me!" she begged. "We'll hide together."

"Better they should get me than both of us," he answered, and he lifted her yielding form to the opening. "I'll return and get you later. We may escape them yet."

She tried to cling to him still, to drag him to the shelter. She begged anew. Her voice was broken. She had not cried till now, and even in this moment she tried, for his sake, to stifle her pent-up sobs.

He kissed her tenderly, but took her arms from about his neck and saw her sink down in the cave. The vines dropped back into place. Then, when he started up the slope again, he discovered the coffee-pot, standing on the rock, with the cup thrown down beside it.

He caught up the tin receptacle, filled it brimming full and was hastening back with it to Papinta when a shout above was answered by Kate, not fifty yards away, below, and retreat had become suddenly vital.

The brew in the cup was half overturned as he quickly replaced it on the ledge. Darting to cover in the greenery, he scarcely made a sound.

"Whoopee!" cried Kate again. "Don't shoot down here!"

She came to the level languidly and started up the slope to take up her coffee-pot and return to the house whence she had come. But she paused at the sight of the cup half filled, and glanced about, suspiciously.

Fernandez for some reason born of the moment had resolved to accost the girl. He parted the shrubbery, with her eyes full upon him, and came out, confronting her in silence.

Kate watched without a sign of either fear or surprise upon her face. She saw the gun upon his hip, but far more interesting was the haggard face of the man whom her father was hunting. She presently nodded.

"Morning," she said.

"Morning." He paused and gazed at her inquiringly.

She said, "Goin' far?"

He answered, "Just sauntering along."

"Fine day fer walkin'—or runnin', either," she observed.

"Beautiful."

Kate sat down on a rock, her eyes upon him constantly. "I don't suppose you stopped to hear the news about Fernandez?"

A slight smile passed across his face. "The news," he said, "sort of overtook me, señorita."

"You needn't spout Spanish to put me on to what you are," she informed him, bluntly.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well?"

She asked, "Did you come here to meet anybody particular?"

"I saw you come up from the gulch," he replied, evasively. "I didn't care to meet anybody else."

"It's a good place to meet a bunch of deputy sheriffs," she said. "They've got this patch surrounded."

He too sat down. "It's a pretty place to live in."

"Yes," agreed Kate, "or to die in, either."

He asked if she lived near-by, in the old adobe house.

"Yes," said Kate, "in the only room the Americans didn't shoot to pieces

when they drove the Mexicans over the border."

"The big room," he said, "on the side of the house next the orchard? I was born in that room."

Kate started to her feet. "You was one of them Mexican children that lost their father—killed—and the mother drove out?" As if ashamed of her outburst, she settled back to her seat, adding, "H'm! Things change, don't they?"

"A little."

They were silent for a moment and Kate took up the cup, half filled with coffee.

"Is this yours?" she said.

He darted her a quick, understanding look. "I—I put it down there, a little bit ago."

She held it out. "You'd better drink it now—it's gittin' cold."

He stood up to receive it. She also rose and their eyes came on a level, where they met and remained steady, exchanging a subtle something that neither quite understood.

"Thank you," he said, and he drank like the famished thing he was.

She watched for a second. "Needn't thank me," she said. "I reckon you can take all you like."

He poured and drank a second cupful before he placed the things upon the rock. Half-inclined to tell of the presence near at hand of his sister so sadly in need of such a drink, he hesitated cautiously,

"I suppose there are men also watching the gulch," he said tentatively.

"My father's supposed to be watchin' there."

"Good shot, I suppose."

"Dead shot."

He felt the necessity of approaching the subject of Papinta. He sat down calmly.

"It seems to me," he said, "when my people used to own this place there used to be a cave where any one could hide. Do you happen to know where it is?"

"Yep," said Kate, "I reckon I do."

"Have many other people found it?"

"No one but me."

The hope grew high in his breast. He felt that behind her bluntness and show of indifference lay a sympathy deep as a river that flows without a sound. He arose again.

"No one but you!" he repeated. "And if you knew that any one was hiding there——"

She interrupted abruptly. "Look here, Fernandez, if you think I'm goin' to show you any cave, or help you hide here this mornin', you're gittin' awful fooled by your girl. I reckon you're scheduled to take your medicine."

He regarded her intently for a moment, without a sign of his shattered hope revealed upon his face.

"All right," he said. "I didn't think you looked like the others, that's all."

"No," she corrected. "You mean you thought I'd go back on my folks for a taffyin' stranger. I just reckoned to entertain you while you was waitin' to git what's comin' to you, savvy?"

"If I haven't got a friend, I reckon I'll get it," he answered indifferently. After a pause of a moment he added, "Why don't you holler and let 'em know I'm here?"

"I ain't no executioner," she answered, a slight color burning in her cheeks. "They'll git you soon enough."

He could go no further toward taking her into his confidence concerning Papinta in the cave.

"Well," he said, rising from his seat and taking a box of cigarettes from his pocket, "it's all in a lifetime." He had opened the box and he held it forth. "Smoke?"

Kate shook her head. "Not till I'm dead, I reckon." She too was standing. She turned away and walked a little toward the greenery.

He took out a smoke, replaced the box in his pocket and struck a match with which he lit the cigarette. Almost in the same instant a shot rang out and he staggered backward, his hand flung up to his shoulder. He caught himself and remained on his feet, swaying heavily. The cigarette had fallen to the ground.

Kate had turned. She saw the line of white about his lips and the look that

had come in his eyes. She ran to him quickly and held him erect.

"You're hit!" she said. "They've got you! The cowards!"

"I'm—all right—it's high—up," he answered faintly. "Tell them——"

She interrupted vehemently. "I didn't go to be so mean! The cave!" She threw off her light serape and caught his weight upon her shoulder. "I ain't like the others! I ain't! I'll hide you! They ain't men! The cave's right here! You've got to hide!" She was urging his uncertain steps down the slope and supporting him toward the wall of rock.

He staggered in his efforts to remain on his feet.

"Not there—never mind—the cave," he faltered. "Let them—get me. You needn't go—back on your—folks."

"Oh, hit me back, but keep on your feet fer a minute!" she answered, helping him with all her splendid strength. "They're coming! I won't let 'em git you!"

She had almost to drag him the last remaining yard, and watching above as she raised the vines and dropped him well inside, she hastily rearranged the growing drapery and stepped away from the place. It was not until then that she noted the fact that her shoulder was red with blood from Fernandez's wound. She darted forward, caught her serape from the ground and threw it about her shoulders to conceal the blot as her father came running to the scene.

"You, Kate!" he panted, as he glanced around. "Where's he gone?"

Kate had assumed her mask of calm, the mask behind which burned a nature as glowing hot as fire.

"Where's who gone?" she answered. "Who d'you mean?"

"Fernandez," said Gardner. "I'd 'a' swore I saw him here, strikin' a match. I fired—and I never miss my man!" He looked at Kate, half suspiciously.

"So you was the one that fired that shot, was you?" she queried. "Well, I was the one that struck that match—and when your bullet come I dropped my cigarette."

She bent forward, picked up the still-lighted cigarette that Fernandez had dropped and placed the end between her lips.

Her father regarded her with his eyes contracted narrowly.

"You smokin', Kate? Since when?" he said. "Look here, gal, you're lyin'. You're tryin' to hide a horse-thief from the law! I know what I seen!"

Kate said, "Dad, don't you talk that-a-way to me. I don't like it."

"Do you think I care what you like in a time like this?" demanded her father. "Where's the man?"

"If you're a man, find him," answered Kate. "If you think I've got him, search me."

She started to go but her father interposed and stopped her.

"Look here," he said sternly, "answer me square. Do you know where he's went?"

"You said I was lyin'," she replied; "now you make good."

"That ain't no answer," he said, "and you know it. You give it to me straight. Have you seen Fernandez here?"

Kate turned upon him with a show of resentment.

"See here, dad, whose gal am I?" she demanded. "That's what I want to know, with you a-runnin' your high-handed bluffs. I'll leave you to run your game your own way."

She started to push past him, but Gardner caught at her quickly, clutched the light serape in his hand—and the blood on her shoulder was revealed. He started back from the sight, almost instantly realizing its exact significance. Kate knew the game was up.

"I knowed you lied, Kate, about the smokin'," said her father. "By God! A gal of mine consortin' with an outlaw!"

She was thoroughly aroused at last. She turned upon him fiercely.

"Oh, an outlaw!" she echoed. "A man we Americans have robbed of his shack—a man that you brave officers have hunted like a dog! An outlaw! And what are we—you and I! Why do you keep those horses always ready in

the gulch? Why did we come here in the night? Why do we live with a name that ain't our own? Why are you scared every day that we may be the next ones hunted down and shot like brutes? Consortin' with outlaws! Yes! It's in my blood! I'm one of 'em—born to it!—born on the border!—born to take what I want and fight to keep it! The law and me was never friends, and it's too late now to begin!"

Her father had shrunk from her, pale and terrified.

"But what do you care for this here horse-thief, Kate?" he asked doggedly. "He's got his sweetheart with him."

She turned upon him instantly. "Sweetheart? It's a lie! Who told you such a lie?"

"Fargo seen the pair of them together last night at dusk," said Gardner. "Just before we got the patch surrounded."

"I don't believe it!" she answered. "He come here alone."

Her father gave a sound of triumph. "I knowed he come here, Kate, and you've got him near-by now," he said. "Don't hide him no longer. Give him up. These men expect me to do my regular duty. If a gal of mine is caught hidin' such a man, what kind of a show will we have? Ain't I——"

He was interrupted by the shout of one of the sheriffs, beyond, at the edge of the growth.

"Gardner! Gardner!" called the man. "Git down to the spring! We think we've got him cornered!"

Gardner raised his voice to call:

"All right! All right!" and he turned to Kate. "Don't do it, gal," he pleaded. "Don't mix in where there's a Mexican woman," and he hastened off, his rifle in his hand.

For a moment Kate stood there, undecided. The poison, however, was in her meditations. She went at once to the cave and threw aside the vines.

Fernandez had managed to stagger to his feet, the better to conceal Papinta's form. He was leaning now against the granite wall, facing Kate as best he might. He even staggered out, after a moment of silence, as she looked

in upon him. The vines fell back into place.

"You must have heard it all," said Kate. "Well? What about the woman?"

"Let me go—down the gulch—the horses," answered Fernandez weakly. "You'll do as much as that?"

"You can't git nuthing from me if you're runnin' with a woman," Kate answered harshly. "If you've got your sweetheart hidin'——" She started for the cave.

He interposed, staggering weakly in her path.

"No, no, I've got no woman," he said, afraid to reveal Papinta's hiding-place to a temper so changeful and uncertain. "Give me one more chance to escape these savage men."

"You'd use me, would you?" Kate demanded. "Git out of my way!" She pushed him aside roughly and he sank on the ground. A moment later she had seen Papinta's prostrate form in the cave.

"Wait—wait—she's only——" started Fernandez, but he was far too weak to tell it was only his sister.

"Your woman!" said Kate, turning upon him in wrath. "And you here tryin' to make me care enough to hide you and cheat the law! Well, you pretty near done it! In two minutes more I might have loved you! Yes, that's the word—and that's my way! But hidin' a woman in my cave, and playin' me—that's what you've got to pay for now—not fer stealin' a bunch of no-good horses! That wasn't nuthin'—but fer stealin' my love, with her a-hidin' here all the time!——" She broke off abruptly, put her hand to her mouth and called out across the hill, "Dad! Dad! Hey, dad!"

Her father ran in upon them breathlessly.

"Fernandez! Shot!" he said. "Is he dead?"

The fugitive had collapsed on the earth.

"Never mind him, he won't git away," said Kate. "The woman's in the cave. You can take 'em both."

Gardner ran to the cave, saw the sleeping girl and mistook her condition.

He said, "I think she's dead."

Fernandez, roused to a spasmodic action at the word, raised up and staggered to his feet.

"Sister!" he cried. "Papinta! Sister!"

Kate saw him pitching headlong toward the cave. She heard the word and understood at last. She caught him in her arms and held him up.

"Your sister?" she said. "Why didn't you—oh, I didn't know! I didn't know!"

Gardner had entered the cave. He came out now with the helpless little figure in his arms.

"I reckon she's only just fainted," he said. "She's still alive."

Kate was already trying to drag the form of Fernandez toward the trail.

"The gulch, dad—the gulch and the horses—quick!" she said. "They ain't goin' to git him again!"

The answer Gardner was about to make was never uttered. Once more a fellow officer called from across the wooded ridge:

"Gardner! Hey, Gardner, ain't you seen Fernandez come down there through the brush?"

He looked at Kate—and read the message in her eyes—the mute appeal of her soul. He had hesitated only a moment—and then he raised his voice.

"No, Bill, he ain't come down."

The saddling in the gulch was accomplished swiftly. Papinta had roused sufficiently to sit up on a horse and ride.

On the best of the broncos Kate sat, astride, with the wounded man before her, tied in his seat.

Gardner stood by when the horses' heads were turned toward the Mexican border.

He simply looked yearningly at Kate for a moment, and then he said, "Gal—good-by."

"Good-by, dad," she answered. "I couldn't help it—he's my kind."

Alone Gardner toiled up the gulch to the patch, a tired-looking man with his rifle in his hand.

A Chat With You

NO city in the world, perhaps, presents the same opportunities for amusement, the same light and shade, as Paris. London is gray and solid dull drab to most of those who visit it, interesting rather on account of its associations than because of any present attractions. New York is the place for the worker rather than the sightseer, and the same is true in even greater degree of Chicago. Cologne, Dresden, Frankfort are all interesting, but they are not world-cities in the true sense. They lack the rush and swirl of tides of population, the capacity for surprising, the infinitude that marks the real metropolis. Paris is where people go to be amused, to free themselves from the trammels of business and custom, to express their individuality by enjoying life in the way they like it best. Because of this, its police annals are the most interesting in the world. Victor Hugo realized this fact. So did Balzac and Eugène Sue. So do we. And that is why we commissioned M. Goron, formerly chief of police for the city of Paris, to write a series of detective stories for THE POPULAR. The first of the series, "The Gipsy Polka," appears in next month's issue. We won't say any more about it now. We want you to read it, and we want to hear what you think of it.



IT is the usual thing for a magazine to make something like this, something out of the ordinary, the big feature of the number in which it appears. With

us, however, things are different. We have a higher standard to live up to. The Goron stories are great, but they are only one of many features we have planned for THE POPULAR. For instance, there is the complete novel in next month's issue, "The Return of Norroy." We all know Norroy, debonair and dilettante, cool and deliberate. We, as well as our readers, have missed him during the months in which he did not appear in our pages. The complete novel to appear in a month was well worth waiting for. With all due conservatism, we consider it the best story George Bronson-Howard has ever written.



EVERYBODY likes a good joke, yet no two persons agree exactly as to what constitutes a joke. Every man knows that he individually has a good sense of humor, and at the same time has a sneaking conviction that other people haven't—at least, not so good a one. We have met a great many people, but we have yet to meet the man who can say honestly that he doesn't know a joke when he sees it, yet every one can tell you of acquaintances who have no sense of humor. Some men laugh at some jokes and some at others. At the same time there are some funny stories so broad and human in spirit as to hit the right spot with every one. Such a tale is Irvin S. Cobb's story, "The Tale of the Hard Luck Guy." It's coming out in the October POPULAR.

DON'T fail to read next month, Ferguson's story, "A True Son of Eli." It is a college-football story, and not of the ordinary, conventional type. It has in it all the atmosphere and flavor of the Yale campus, all the youthful dash and enthusiasm that make college days a bright and glowing memory for every old graduate. But it has also something bigger and better than these. You can't read it without being a little better and bigger and wiser for the reading. You can't read it without feeling a keen sympathy and fellowship for the hero, without learning something more about your real self and the real self of your fellow man.



BY this time, we hope, you have read the first instalment of H. G. Wells' serial, "Tono-Bungay," which has its inception in this number. We consider it one of the most remarkable stories we have ever read. It is almost too good to keep. We would like to give you a glimpse into the second instalment now, but we don't want to spoil the good time you are going to have next month. We know that you like what you have read of it, and we are sure that you will like what you are going to read still better.



J. K. EGERTON has surprised us by giving us a sequel to "Queen Draga's Cape" even better than the story which is concluded this month. We thought that it was about high-water mark for a story of that type, but we are still learning. "In the Cause of the Princess Sonia," another two-part story which starts next month, will interest you more than any "Tommy Williams" story you have ever read; and that's saying a good deal.

THERE is a delightful circus story coming out in THE POPULAR next month, written by Charles Francis Bourke, and an exciting tale of a submarine-boat, by T. Jenkins Hains. Albert Dorrington has contributed in "The Gold-throwers" a story which gives an interesting and amusing side-light on Chinese characteristics. There is another splendid "Jack Bellamy" story, by B. M. Bower, and a new serial of Western life, "Lost Cabin Mine."



AFTER all, luck has something to do with it. For years we have been doing the best we knew how to make this publication first in its class. It isn't boasting to say that we have made good. But lately things have been coming our way even more frequently than usual. It's true that we have tried even harder than ever. It is certainly true that we have spent a great deal more hard cash than ever before. But that doesn't account for it all. Cash and hard work will go a long way, but recently we have got hold of things that neither could be depended on to purchase for us. Never in our history as a magazine have we had such a collection of unusually good stories on hand. Never have we been so confident that we were going to please you in the future even better than in the past. We can't tell you all about it now. There isn't space, and if we started we should find it hard to stop; but if you don't find that within the next few months THE POPULAR has become brighter, more interesting, bigger than ever before, write and tell us about it. We have been building up and improving for a long period, and at times we felt that we had reached our limit. Now, however, we are certain that in the coming fall months we are going to give you the best fiction magazine you ever read.

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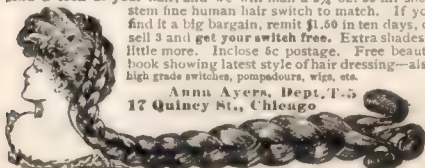
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JUST what gloves should accompany the dinner-jacket is a bit of a puzzle. If one regards the jacket as a formal garment, then gray suède would be correct. If, however, one considers the "Tuxedo" purely a lounging-jacket, then cape or chamois would answer. This summer the problem was solved in a measure by the wearing of silk gloves. These were light, cool and tubable and fitted the purpose to a nicety. The silk glove, though, is clearly unsuited to winter, and thus the question of the right glove for the "Tuxedo" must still be left open. While some men wear a silk hat with the dinner-jacket, the incongruity of a high hat and a short coat must be apparent.

To achieve a distinguished air befitting the whole costume, a poke or lap-front collar, rather than a wing, should accompany the frock-coat. It is hard to adjust an Ascot smoothly and gracefully under a wing collar, whereas the poke or lap-front offers no obstacle. At garden-parties, horse shows and like gatherings of a character not stiffly ceremonious, the gray morning suit, together with a white waistcoat, a white Ascot fastened with a gold pin, and a gray derby, are notably smart.

For the week-end visit to the country, a white serge suit will be found capital 'a-lounging'. It not only feels delightfully cool, but has, too, a crisp, cleanly look, most grateful to the eye. As one wearer aptly puts it, "I feel that I'm part of the landscape." Of course, only the fold collar is worn with this suit. It is not desirable to have one's tie, shirt, socks and shoes white also, as then there is no agreeable contrast, ever the life of dress.

Having the details of one's evening dress harmonize in color and design is both good form and good taste. A very pleasing effect is conveyed by wearing a white piqué shirt with ribs up and down and a white piqué waistcoat with ribs woven across. The tie to accompany these should be plain white, not piqué or figured, as too much of any single design in dress looks insipid. While it would be absurd to say that there is a fashion in suspenders to go with evening clothes, those men who pay punctilious heed to the refinements of dress choose the inner articles of wear quite as carefully as the outer. Narrow white silk-and-linen or piqué suspenders are approved with ceremonious clothes and gray silk or soft suède leather suspenders are favored for the "Tuxedo."

It is the tendency this season to have the white afternoon waistcoat collarless, that it may show to advantage above the lapels of the coat. Three front buttons are ordinarily used and the edges and pockets of the garment are wide-stitched like those of the fashionable coat. One's waistcoat should fit rather snugly over the hips and this effect is obtained by deep side-vents and a bit of shaping-in from the shoulders downward. If flaps be used on either the upper or lower pockets, an ornate touch is lent by peaking, curving or scalloping them.

Gardenias and orchids lend a crisp touch of color to the frock or morning coat. The wearing of a boutonnière has fallen into disuse among Americans, though it is very prevalent abroad. Indeed, the "smart" London clubman regards the boutonnière as an indispensable

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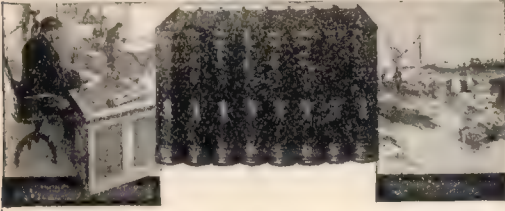
Then, Robert Aitken's serial, **A Million a Minute**, is fairly humming by this time. **The Sword of Esmé Dacres** continues to carve out a brilliant path to the honor of its brave owner. A clue is at last discovered in **A Hunt Without a Clue**. The department of humor is a fitting conclusion to the feast.

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sound a bit revolutionary, tints like olive and blue-green are extremely fetching.

Custom and tradition frown upon every attempt to detract from the simplicity of evening dress. For this reason, the elaborate braid down the outer seam of the trousers recently adopted by some young men can hardly be called a fashion. It is merely an affectation of the extremely military in dress. A new evening shirt has narrow folded-back cuffs with corners decidedly cut away. The idea is not at all practical, since the double thickness of linen over the wrist is inconvenient and heating. One may wear patent-leather shoes with either kid or cloth tops. The latter are preferred, and the toe is left capless to make the foot look trimmer and slenderer. No outer garment goes so well with evening dress as the Chesterfield overcoat, unless it be the Inverness, and that—more's the pity—the youngster of the period scorns as old-fashioned.

Leather has long been a "smart" material for traveling and room use. There are leather collar-boxes, handkerchief-cases, whisk-broom-holders and razor-rolls, as well as leather-backed clothes-brushes, hair-brushes and a dozen and one other articles dear to him whose head must perforce flit from pillow to pillow. The advantages of leather are that it is light, soft and compact. In choosing a leather toilet-bag for traveling it will be found more satisfactory to select an unfitted one and buy the various articles to go into it separately. Thus one may obtain just what is needed instead of *impedimenta*.

Heavy white buck gloves are usually worn to matinees and indoor shows before six. The white kid glove is reserved wholly for evening dress. To accompany the frock or morning coat only the gray suede glove is proper, whereas gray reindeer is used for business, driving, motoring and so on. It is best to choose a suede glove of medium weight for afternoon wear, as the light leather is not sufficient protection and the heavy glove causes the hand to perspire. Shirts with bosoms and cuffs of a different material from the body and sleeves are being revived. They are always made with stiffly laundered fronts and in rather bold designs.

BEAUNASH.

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